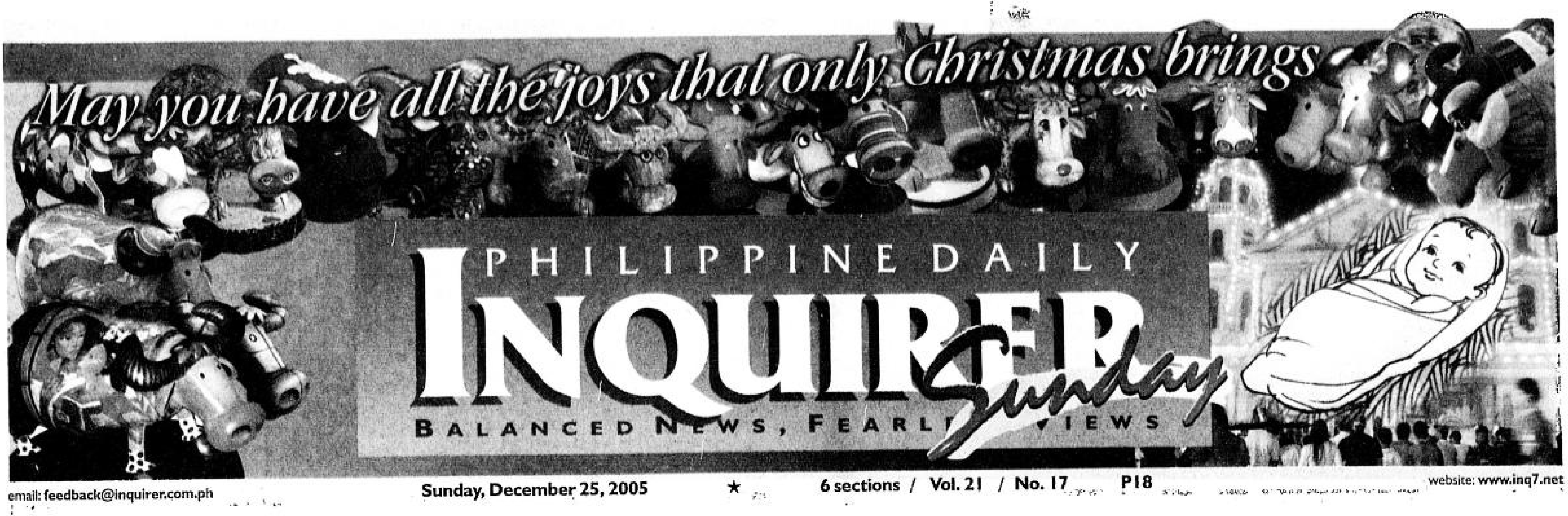
May you have all the joys that only Christmas brings

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER Sunday
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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GMA wish: Less red tape

Gonzalez defends appointment of 2 execs

By Armand N. Nocum and Norman Bordadora

THE PUBLIC CAN EXpect a more responsive and action-oriented administration next year, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

In a phone interview with the INQUIRER, Gonzalez said President Macapagal-Arroyo called a Cabinet meeting on Friday and told her officials that she wanted to cut red tape to make the government more responsive and attuned to the needs of the poor.

"We must resolve to be able to render service that will be satisfactory to the people, especially the common people," he quoted Ms Arroyo as saying.

According to Gonzalez, this may have been the reason Ms Arroyo decided to appoint two officials who are known to get the job done despite their involvement in controversy.

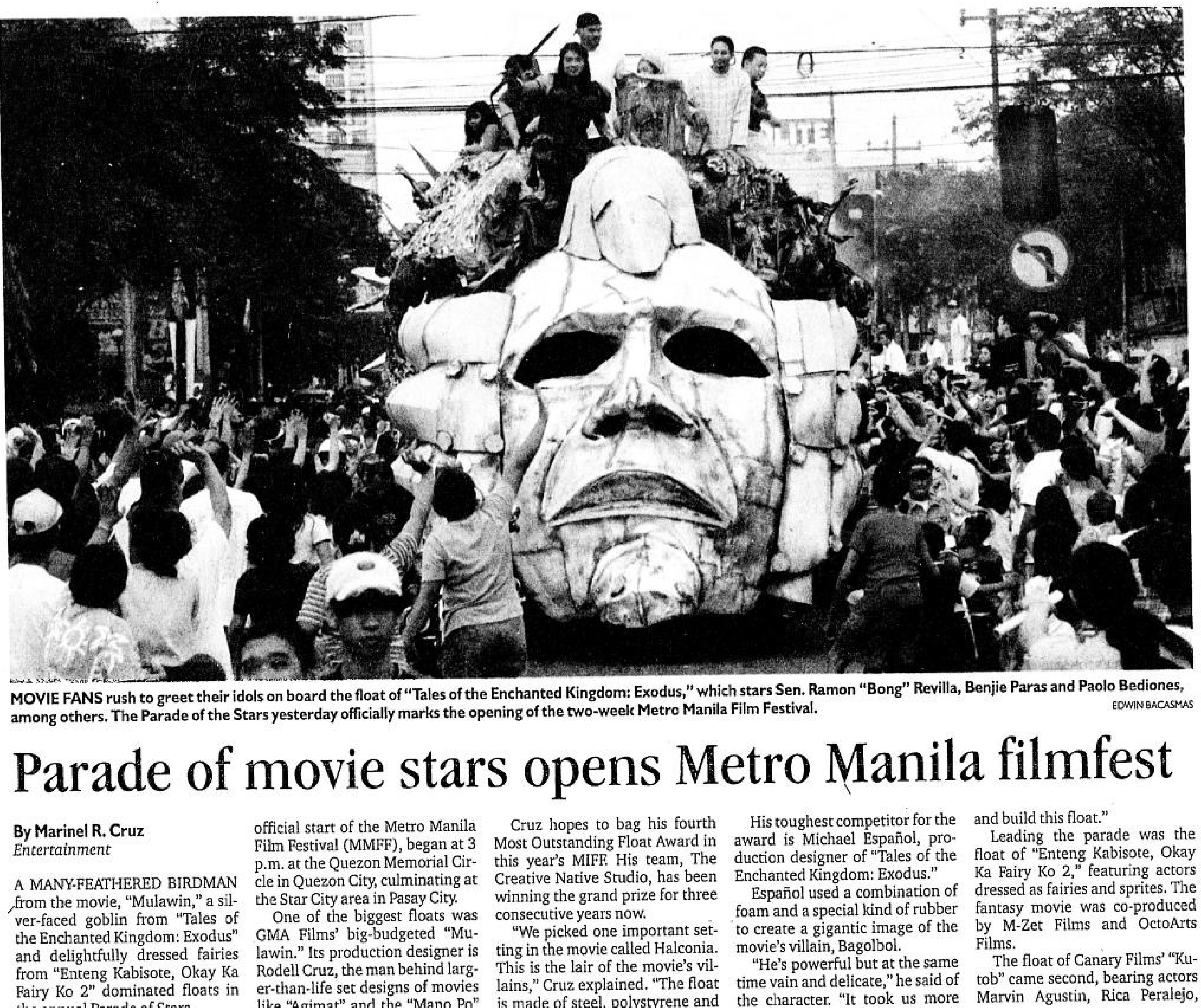
The appointment of Napoleon Morales and Arthur Yap as officer in charge of the Bureau of Customs and presidential adviser on job creation, respectively, has drawn criticism. But Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the President believed in the capability of the two officials to deliver the goods.

"He has exceeded collection targets, and I think that is what's important to the President," Ermita said of Morales, a former customs chief of Batangas who reportedly enjoys the backing of a Palace insider, and whose appointment at the BOC has been opposed by Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes.

In March, a graft complaint was filed by Reyes' office, the National Anti-Smuggling Task Force, against "customs officials of the Port of Batangas" who were believed "liable for possible violations of … the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act."

The complaint stemmed from a supposed misdeclaration of a

GMA WISH/ A4



MOVIE FANS rush to greet their idols on board the float of "Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus," which stars Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Benjie Paras and Paolo Bediones, among others. The Parade of the Stars yesterday officially marks the opening of the two-week Metro Manila Film Festival. EDWIN BACASMAS

Parade of movie stars opens Metro Manila filmfest

By Marinel R. Cruz
Entertainment

A MANY-FEATHERED BIRDMAN from the movie, "Mulawin," a silver-faced goblin from "Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus" and delightfully dressed fairies from "Enteng Kabisote, Okay Ka Fairy Ko 2" dominated floats in the annual Parade of Stars.

The parade, which marks the official start of the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF), began at 3 p.m. at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City, culminating at the Star City area in Pasay City.

One of the biggest floats was GMA Films' big-budgeted "Mulawin." Its production designer is Rodell Cruz, the man behind larger-than-life set designs of movies like "Agimat" and the "Mano Po" series.

Cruz hopes to bag his fourth Most Outstanding Float Award in this year's MIFF. His team, The Creative Native Studio, has been winning the grand prize for three consecutive years now.

"We picked one important setting in the movie called Halconia. This is the lair of the movie's villains," Cruz explained. "The float is made of steel, polystyrene and fiberglass."

His toughest competitor for the award is Michael Español, production designer of "Tales of the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus."

Español used a combination of foam and a special kind of rubber to create a gigantic image of the movie's villain, Bagolbol.

"He's powerful but at the same time vain and delicate," he said of the character. "It took us more than a month to conceptualize and build this float."

Leading the parade was the float of "Enteng Kabisote, Okay Ka Fairy Ko 2," featuring actors dressed as fairies and sprites. The fantasy movie was co-produced by M-Zet Films and OctoArts Films.

The float of Canary Films' "Kutob" came second, bearing actors Marvin Agustin, Rica Peralejo,

PARADE/ A5

This time, Mike A plays Santa to kids

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

SANTA CLAUS CAME ON Christmas Eve in a white Lexus sport utility vehicle, bearing gifts not crafted by elves but by San Miguel Corp. for 2,000 slum children gathered at Malacañang.

The portly Jose Miguel Arroyo, fresh from a Hong Kong Disneyland jaunt, appeared jolly in his brief appearance in the annual Christmas gift-giving at the New Executive Building grounds.

The place could easily be mistaken for a relief distribution center for disaster victims.

Last year, the First Gentleman treated kids from Manila's poorest barangays with a grand children's party complete with mascots and a giant slide. His two grandchildren—Mikaela Gloria and Eva Victoria—were there.

This time, Arroyo was only accompanied by President Macapagal-Arroyo, who arrived after most of the gifts had been handed out.

The President's husband gave away three bags for the benefit of the cameras, while the rest of the goodies were handled by his staff.

Arroyo explained that most barangay leaders did not expect

THIS TIME/ A4

HOHOHO, BUMABAHA ANG PAMASKO!

Trader finds lucky stars in 'parol'

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Daisy Flores' wish upon a star has come true.

Since October, there has been no rest for the weary 39-year-old in the business of making Christmas lanterns. The initiative has plucked her out of debt and led her to a thriving business.

"*Minawa kami bie uli ning pamagtindang parul* (Our life has improved by selling lanterns)," Flores said in between attending to buyers doing last-minute shopping at the Lantern Plaza here on Thursday.

Her eyes were still droopy from lack of sleep, having to tend to her stall up to midnight. That has been her working hours over the past three months, she said.

From that stall alone, she has already sold 600 star-shaped lanterns in the run-up to Christmas.

Flower and fruit-shaped pieces that decked the

TRADER/ A4

Ghosts of tsunami victims still haunt Thailand

VERONIKA Areskoug from Sweden plays with her daughter Alfdis in the calm waters of Khao Lak, 110 km from the Thai resort island of Phuket which was devastated by a tsunami a year ago. REUTERS

PHI PHI ISLAND, THAILAND—Few will actually admit to seeing a ghost themselves, but everyone has heard about them on this once idyllic island which is still rebuilding after an Indian Ocean tsunami killed 700 people there on Dec. 26 last year.

There was the woman who saw foreign tourists struggling to escape the sea almost a year after the tsunami, and the hotel worker who heard ghosts playing on the beach.

Guards at an oceanfront plaza on nearby Phuket's famed Patong beach said one of their colleagues quit after hearing a foreign woman cry "help me" all night long.

Similar stories abound of a female foreign ghost walking along the shoreline at night calling for her child.

Many Thais say they believe the souls of thousands who were killed in the tsunami continue to haunt the Andaman coast long after the debris had been cleared away and reconstruction had began.

It's not so much that the spirits are angry as confused. Many Thais of all faiths say that if people die in pain or by accident, their spirits remain lost until they understand what has happened and can move on.

For 26-year-old Lungyai Suriyaporn, her fear that ghosts were still wandering the beaches of Phi Phi had prompted her to stay away from the island for nearly 10 months after the tsunami.

Lungyai returned in October to reopen her backpacker lodge. Guests have been trickling to the modest two-story house, where she also runs a small convenience store off her porch.

She believes most of the lost

GHOSTS/ A4

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly clourainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/04/07/05

Second FRONT PAGE

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Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Moro rebs recruiting, says AFP

By Dona Pazzibugan

A TOP MILITARY COMMANDER has insisted that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is recruiting for war in spite of its ongoing peace talks with the government.

Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan, chief of the Armed Forces Southern Command, said his men had secured affidavits about the preparation "from the trainees themselves."

"We have received a lot of reports from local officials, barangay captains, mayors and our ground commanders about the MILF's recruitment and training of 4,000 members," Adan told reporters during a trip to the military headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo last week.

He did not say how many affidavits they were holding, but said these were voluntarily turned over to military commanders in Mindanao.

The MILF has denied it was recruiting and training more members.

Government peace negotiators have likewise belied the reports and asked the military not to issue statements that can jeopardize the peace talks.

"Of course they (MILF) will deny it. But you can't hide the affidavits," Adan shot back.

He claimed MILF training is "very rampant" in Zamboanga Sibugay, saying a councilor of Zamboanga City reported to him last week that some residents were brought to Sacol Island for training.

"How will you dispute that? (The councilor) did not make that up," Adan said.

Adan also accused the MILF of expanding its territories, saying one of his brigade commanders recently reported to him that cases of illegal land encroachment in South Cotabato had increased dramatically lately.

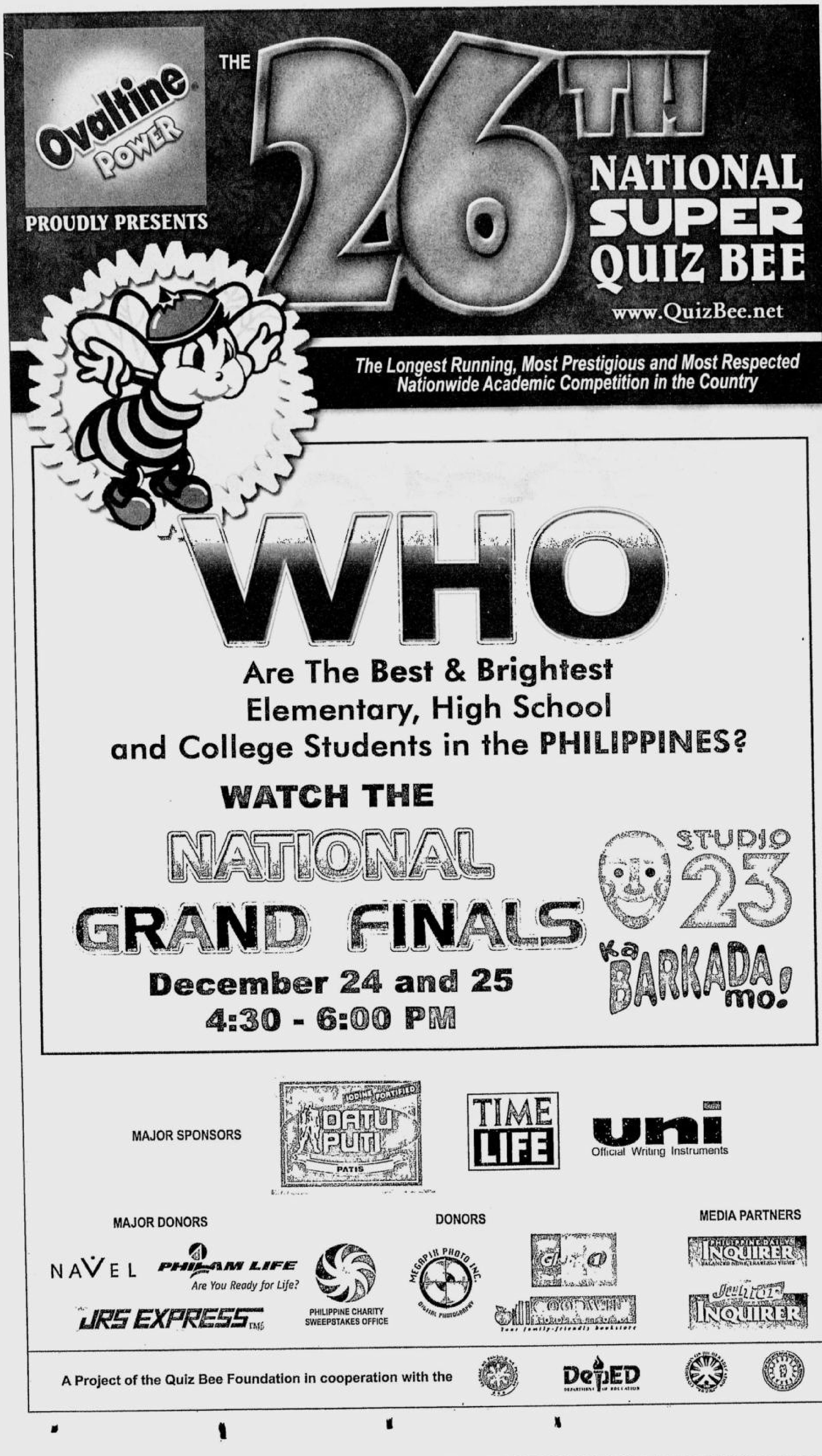
"So here we see they are expanding (their territories). That's why I told my commanders we have to do something because ... my mission is to contain the MILF, meaning we should not let it grow in strength and in territory."

Adan said if the peace talks fail, the military should not be blamed.

"We did not start this. By conducting training, they are endangering the peace talks because the peace talks are premised on building trust and confidence," he said.

"But if you are preparing for war, for explosives and demolition and jihad, is that trust-building?"

Adan said he had instructed ground commanders to conduct "preventive military actions."



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Truce just for show, Reds say

LUCENA CITY—COMMUNIST SPOKESPERSON Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal pooh-poohed the government's unilateral four-day Christmas ceasefire with New People's Army rebels calling it part of a military-designed psywar.

"The government ceasefire is only for show—a psywar. It's part of the military's deceptive scheme to cover up their planned attacks against us as we celebrate the party anniversary," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview.

He added: "But the enemies will be in for a big surprise. Our Red-fighters are ready to meet them once they step inside our controlled territories."

The communist spokesman claimed they had received information from sympathetic elements within the Armed Forces of the Philippines that some of the rebel camps would be the targets of government attacks in time for the celebration of the Communist Party of the Philippines' 37th founding anniversary tomorrow.

Rosal claimed the NPA maintains at least 130 guerilla fronts scattered across the country.

Military officials estimate that the NPA has a strength of at least 10,000.

Despite the NPA's non-observance of the traditional Yuletide truce, President Macapagal-Arroyo on Friday announced the suspension of offensive military operations (Somo) against communist rebels on Dec. 24, Dec. 25, Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

The military said the Somo aimed to "project a good public image for the government due to the goodwill it offers to the enemy."

However, all military units had been ordered to stay on alert despite the unilateral truce to thwart any attacks by the communist guerillas.

In a statement released on Thursday midnight, Rosal said they would forego a Christmas ceasefire this year to protest the military's alleged hand in the murders of left-wing activists and the government's insincerity during the peace talks.

However, he clarified that despite their non-declaration of a holiday truce with government forces, the NPA will not stage relentless attacks against conventional enemy targets.

"Our Red-fighters will still observe the traditional defensive mode around camp perimeters. I assure the Filipino people that the NPA will not shift to attacking rampages. That's part of the lies being peddled by the fascist government forces," Rosal said.

He stressed that the revolutionary movement, particularly the NPA guerillas, would observe and respect the Christmas traditions of the Filipino people.

"The CPP and the NPA assure the Filipino people that we will not spoil their Christmas celebration," Rosal said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

VP Noli calls for ceasefire from bickerings

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO YESTERDAY called for a ceasefire in political bickerings so that people could fully enjoy Christmas.

Noting the political controversies which continue to hound the country, De Castro said that political leaders should not distract the people from celebrating the holiday season and continue to hope for a brighter future.

"It has been said that in desperate times, a measure of hope is just what is needed. For truly, hope is the most effective weapon we have in successfully facing all the challenges before us," De Castro said.

The Vice President said that while both external and internal challenges had somehow affected the people's faith in the government, positive indicators of development, however, should not be taken for granted.

Among these indicators, he said, were the stable peso, the vibrant stock market and the decreasing oil prices in the world market.

De Castro said he was confident that the economic and political challenges were only temporary and that in the end, the people's faith in God and the government would enable them to hurdle them.

"Challenges are meant to be hurdled. Even the richest and most powerful nations confront similar challenges and there is no other way but find ways to overcome them. Hurdling these ordeals will only make us stronger and more resilient," De Castro said.

"Let not these challenges cause us to lose focus on the true significance the Christmas season brings. The Christmas holiday is a truly Filipino feast. May it continue to inspire us to bring out the best in the Filipino," he said.

FVR defection could tip balance vs GMA–Abat

By Norman Bordadora

THE SELF-PROCLAIMED PRESIDENT of the revolutionary transition government yesterday said former President Fidel Ramos' withdrawal of support from President Macapagal-Arroyo could be the tipping point that would force the incumbent to step down from Malacañang.

Retired Gen. Fortunato Abat, Ramos' one-time defense secretary and classmate at the Philippine Military Academy, acknowledged that the former President's defection to the anti-Arroyo forces would definitely strengthen the ouster moves and could spell Ms Arroyo's fall.

"It will strengthen our forces," Abat said, noting that Ramos was the one who saved Ms Arroyo from a possible ouster last July when Cabinet secretaries resigned and key allies of former President Corazon Aquino and Senate President Franklin Drilon called for the President to quit.

Asked if Ramos' withdrawal of support could result in Ms Arroyo's ouster six months after the Hello Garci scandal, Abat said: "It could."

Ramos and House Speaker Jose de Venecia came to Ms Arroyo's rescue in July, successfully turning the tide on those hoping that the calls for resignation from Aquino and Drilon would force the President out.

Former Ambassador Roy Señeres, one of those arrested at the Club Filipino and charged with inciting to sedition together with Abat, said Ramos' defection from the Arroyo camp could be a major breakthrough but doubted if it would be the tipping point.

"Remember, there are still many in the [Armed Forces] who are upset with him [because of allegations of corruption]," Señeres said at the weekly Kapihan sa Sulo news forum.

The Armed Forces' withdrawal of support remains the vital factor that could force Ms Arroyo to step down, he said. "I am urging the (Armed Forces) to do a Ramos. That will be completely legitimate."

In 1986, Ramos, who was then the Armed Forces vice chief of staff, withdrew his support for then President Ferdinand Marcos which led to People Power that toppled the Marcos regime.

Former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes did the same thing when he withdrew his support for former President Joseph Estrada in January 2001 and caused the fall of the Estrada administration.

BEAREAVED FAMILY. Lucila Wycoco, wife of the late NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, watch as the coffin of her husband is brought out of the NBI Headquarters for burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani. REM ZAMORA

'Wykes' laid to rest at Libingan

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Tina G. Santos

WHILE THE BAND PLAYED Chopin's "Marche Funebre," Reynaldo Wycoco was brought to his final resting place a little past noon yesterday at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Taguig.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) chief died on Monday, a month after he suffered a massive stroke and slipped into a deep coma after presiding over a meeting at his office. He was 59.

Wycoco's pall bearers included his brother Supt. Edgardo Wycoco, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-Manila, Sen. Alfredo Lim and NBI security officers.

The funeral cortege of some 200 relatives, friends and colleagues followed Wycoco's jeep-drawn carriage bedecked with white orchids and anthuriums to the burial site at the generals' section—some 700 meters from the state cemetery's entrance.

When the priest signaled immediate family and relatives to take a last glimpse at Wycoco, his mother cried and was inconsolable.

His widow Lucila and children tried to hold back their tears but they, too, started to cry when the band played and Wycoco's colleagues sang the Philippine Military Academy's (PMA) anthem.

Throughout the song, Lucila could only hug the folded Philippine flag passed on to her by her husband's colleagues.

Earlier, Wycoco's widow had asked mourners to give her husband "a standing ovation for a good life."

"Thank you very much for your outpouring of love and affection ... we shall miss him but I'm sure Wykes would not want us to be sad," Lucila told the crowd as she broke down in tears.

Present at the funeral were President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes and Col. Jovito Palparan.

GUSI PEACE PRIZE
MANILA, PHILIPPINES
2005

PEACE AWARDS
Recipients of the 2005 Gusi Peace Prize from all over the world pose for a picture during the recent awarding at the Camp Emilio Aguinaldo Theater. The prize is awarded every year to distinguished individuals or groups around the world who have made exemplary contributions to society, including peace and human rights, politics, science, and the performing arts. The 15 recipients are: Congresswoman Madeleine Z. Bordallo of the United States for governance and legislation; Dr. Anthony C.H. Wong of Hong Kong for economics; George Dovellos of Greece for business and humanitarianism; Dr. Suvedra Natarajan of India for medicine; Malcolm Prowse of Australia, for human rights; Sr. Arlene Riccio and the Sisters of St. Mary of the Providence of Italy for social services; Regina Paz L. Lopez of the Philippines, for children's welfare; Akbar Kahn of India for cinema; Archbishop Nikitas Lulias of Greece for religion; Jose Mari Chan of the Philippines, for performing arts; David Bussau of Australia, for humanitarianism; Alexandra P. Romualdez of the Philippines for journalism; Prof. Li Qi of China for visual arts; Mary Coop of Australia for women's rights; and Mayor Edward Hagedorn of the Philippines for ecosystem and biodiversity.

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V. Francisco St., Krus Na Ligas, Diliman Branch
Papua St. Mindanao Ave. Talipapa, Novaliches Branch
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Casa Malvar Bldg., Gen. Malvar St. Cor. Singalong Branch
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EGI Taft Tower Condominium Taft Avenue, Malate Branch
Zaragosa St., Tondo Branch

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Tiffany Mansion Eisenhower Street, Greenhills Branch
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MAKATI
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P 1, P 1 B 17 L7 Bagong Silang Branch
Samson Road, Torres St. Branch
179 Geronimo Street Branch
Makaneneng St., Bagong Barrio Branch

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National Road, Putatan Branch

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Quirino Ave., Don Galo Parañaque Branch

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T39 The Outlet Yard Ortigas Ext. Sta. Lucia Branch
East Ortigas Mansion, Ortigas Ext., Sta. Lucia Branch
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C Panorama St., SSS Village Branch
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Bonanza St., Don Carlos Village Branch
Taft Ave. Extension cor. Edsa Branch
2482-C Park Avenue Branch
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Karangalan Drive, Karangalan Vil., Cainta Branch
PFCI Brgy. San Andres, Cainta Branch
A. Bonifacio Avenue, Greenland, Cainta Branch
A Gertruder St., Brgy. Mambugan, Antipolo Branch
P. [illegible] Dela Paz Antipolo Branch
Joaquin St., [illegible] Subd., Angono Branch
A National Rd., Calumpang, Binangonan Branch
St. Michael Homes, Pantok, Binangonan Branch
Naval St., Taytay Branch
National Road, Ilog Pugad, Taytay Branch

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Golden City Subd., Sta Rosa Branch
P. Zamora St., National Road, Lumban Branch
M. Paulino St., cor. M. Leonor St., San Pablo Branch
Tower 1 Paseo Country Market Sta. Rosa Branch
Rizal St., San Pedro Branch
Km. 50 Parian Calamba Branch
National Hi-Way Brgy., Pulo, Cabuyao
KMOR Appliances National Hi-way, Sta. Rosa Branch
Palao Subd., Banuc, Cabuyao Branch
J.P Rizal St., Poblacion, Cabuyao Branch
Tatlong Hari Street, Sta. Rosa Branch
San Lorenzo St., Balibago, Sta Rosa Branch
Emerald St., Umali Subd., Los Baños Branch
Gen Luna St., Pila Branch
Maharlika Drive United, San Pedro Subd, San Pedro Branch
Masagana St., Katapatan Homes, Cabuyao Branch
Postrana Bldg., 147 National Road, Real, Calamba Branch
Carlos Arcade Tagaytay Hi-way, Sta. Cruz, Sta.Rosa Branch
Luxery Homes, Mabuhay City, Cabuyao Branch
Panorama Bldg., Canlalay National H-way, Biñan Branch
Mamig, Cabuyao Branch

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Imperial Court Subd., Legaspi Branch
Brgy. 3 Poduran, Al[illegible] Branch
Marquez St., Old Al[illegible] Branch

CAMARINES SUR
San Cris St., Pasacao Bra[illegible]
Dayangdang St., Naga Bra[illegible]

BULACAN
Pulo Drive, Bulihan, Malolos Branch
Cruz na Daan, San Rafael Branch
Mc. Arthur Hi-way, Brgy. Corazon, Calumpit Branch
Cagayan Valley Road, Poblacion, Baliuag Branch
Metrogate Subdivision, Meycauayan Branch
National Road, Moson, San Jose Del Monte Branch

MINDORO
Francisco St., Mar Francisco, Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro Branch
Calapan, Mindoro Branch

PAMPANGA
4th Street Paraiso, Sindalan, San Fernando Branch
Fatima Village, Sta. Cruz, Porac Branch
Santo Rosario St., San Jose, Angeles Branch
Mc. Arthur Hi-way Puruk Uno, Kapalangan, Apalit Branch
Mc. Arthur Highway, 2009 Angeles Branch
Brgy. Nueva Victoria Mexico Branch
Sitio Sto. Cristo Masangsang, Mexico Branch
Paralaya St., San Matias, Sto. Tomas Branch
Olongapo Gapan Rd. Dolores, San Fernando Branch

LA UNION
2RS Bldg. Eremando St., Ortiz, Nagulalan Branch
Bauang La Union Branch

NUEVA ECIJA
San Juan North Cabiao Branch

PANGASINAN
Tanguile St., Villa Pozorrubio Branch
Pasibi East, Urbiztondo Branch
Brgy. Palamis, Marcos Ave., Alaminos Branch
Pandan Avenue, Poblacion, Mapandan Branch
San Fabian Branch
Gomez St., cor. Cariño St., Umingan Branch
San Emilio St., Zone 4 Vilasis Branch

ZAMBALES
Brgy. Rosete, San Felipe Branch
National Road, Brgy. Rizal, San Antonio Branch

OLONGAPO
Subic Bay Freeport Zone

DAGUPAN
33 Zamora Street Branch

MT. PROVINCE
Bontoc Branch

TARLAC
Odonell Settlement Center, Capas Branch
Q Teresa Commercial Complex, Tibag Branch
Balibago, Primero Branch
118 Ley-anna Bldg., Hilario st., Ligtasan Branch
Teresa Commercial Complex Tibag Branch

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Centro 3, Claveria, Cagayan Valley Branch

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GMA wish: Less red tape

From page A1

shipment of cornstarch, which supposedly caused "undue injury" to the Philippine government.

Morales was then chief of the customs unit at the Batangas port.

But on Dec. 9, a certification issued by the Office of the Ombudsman said Morales had "no pending administrative and criminal cases filed against him."

The certification was silent on the status of the complaint filed by Reyes' office.

Gonzalez, however, said the fact that Morales was cleared by the Ombudsman showed that the complaint had no basis to the complaint.

Surplus collection

Morales himself denied that he had a pending graft charge at the Office of the Ombudsman.

He said one of the requirements before his appointment by the President was a clearance from antigraft prosecutors.

Morales said that during his watch in 2004, the Batangas port managed to come up with more the P3 billion in surplus collection.

"If there was smuggling in Batangas, we would not have reached that level of collection," he said, adding that collections in Batangas reached a total of P17 billion in 2004.

Morales told the INQUIRER that there was also no basis for the filing of a complaint against him in connection with the alleged questionable release of the multimillion-peso shipment of cornstarch.

"The government did not lose a single centavo from the release of the shipment," he said, contesting the statement of Reyes' office that "the transaction was manifestly and grossly disadvantageous to the state's interest."

Morales said the importer had paid duties on the shipment but that the duties remained on appeal.

Per Morales' account, the cornstarch shipment was declared "for animal feeding only." But unconvinced Batangas customs personnel wanted to examine the shipment and "released it tentatively."

"It was examined by the [Department of Science of Technology and the Bureau of Food and Drug] ... but the results were inconclusive," Morales said.

"So we just asked the importer to pay the customs duties [on the presumption that the shipment may be for human consumption], and just appeal the appraisal. Until now, the [matter] is on appeal," he added.

Yap's case

As for the case of Yap, the former agriculture secretary is linked to the questionable P8.4-billion Agusan Reserve Area Development Project in Agusan del Sur.

Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales earlier said proponents had planned to use P8 billion in coconut levy funds when the project "had nothing to do with coconuts."

The Bureau of Internal Revenue had also charged Yap and his father with tax evasion in connection with an alleged failure to pay P4 million in real estate taxes in 1997. The charges were dismissed on Oct. 12.

But despite these changes, Gonzalez said he found nothing "criticizable" in Yap, a former student of Ms Arroyo's who was also a one-time chair of the National Food Authority.

Gonzalez said the President wanted all departments to fast-track the delivery of services to the poor.

He said the President was "passionate about the issue of revenue collection, job creation and building of houses for the poor," among others.

'Cut paperwork'

Gonzalez said Ms Arroyo had asked Morales to "simplify procedure, reduce paperwork" and stop corruption in the graft-prone BOC.

He said that according to the President's wishes, there should be less documents for people to sign when they open business ventures or go into export or import.

"Whatever mandates for government projects to be done, there should be a follow-through and proper reporting for us to know the progress of the project," Gonzalez said.

He also said the President:

- Did not want the government to be "bogged down by endless planning sessions without accomplishing a project."
- Made it clear that "the time for preparation" and formulation of "rules and regulations" was over.

Arrest warrants

Gonzalez said Ms Arroyo wanted the Department of Justice to expand the work of its Action Center, in order to ensure the serving of arrest warrants issued by the courts.

"It is useless to talk about the justice system when we cannot even serve warrants of arrest and the people see criminals running around," he quoted Ms Arroyo as saying.

Gonzalez said the President also told them to set goals and ensure that these would be accomplished next year.

"Let us make our New Year's wish something that we can attain in the new year," the President said, according to Gonzalez.

This time, Mike A plays Santa to kids

From page A1

the annual gift-giving to continue this year.

"This was a big surprise to them," he said. "They thought we wouldn't give them anything this year."

Each bag contained two 1-liter bottles of Coca-Cola, Purefoods-Hormel corned beef, pork and beans, and *sisig*, and Magnolia *queso de bola* solicited from San Miguel.

The food giant is run by businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, leader of the Nationalist People's Coalition and a key administration ally in the House of Representatives.

"All these products are just right for their media noche. They're ready, they don't have to buy," Arroyo said.

A merrier Christmas

Asked if this Christmas was merrier than last year, Arroyo said: "Of course, I'm happier now. We have a strong peso, we are the overall champion in the Southeast Asia Games, gasoline prices are down, and there is an upsurge of patriotism, of national pride. Everybody is happy."

It was an exceptionally grueling year for Arroyo—regarded as a magnet for controversy because of his alleged backroom wheeling and dealing.

Arroyo, his brother and eldest son were linked to "jueteng" payoffs that forced the President to send him abroad to cool off.

He said "it was all worth it" to celebrate this Christmas in Malacañang after the worst political crisis to hit the Arroyo presidency.

Arroyo refused to comment on his wife's political troubles sparked by disclosures of the "Hello Garci" wiretaps that led to her aborted impeachment in the House over allegations she stole last year's presidential election.

AN EXUBERANT child carries home his bagful of Christmas goodies given by Malacañang to poor residents of San Miguel District in Manila. LYN RILLON

Arroyo's wish?

Arroyo's Christmas wish? "I hope that we will realize that we are all Filipinos and that we should be united. When Filipinos are united, they can achieve everything. Look at the SEA Games where we were united."

Arroyo downplayed criticisms of the trip to Hong Kong that he gave to the SEA Games medalists as a reward instead of treating them to a local tourist spot.

"I'm just laughing that off because the athletes themselves will answer that. It's a lifelong dream for them. Just ask the athletes what they felt when they were there. They are happy, they are the heroes," Arroyo said.

Trader finds lucky stars in 'parol'

From page A1

streets of Marikina City in Metro Manila, Angeles City and Mabalacat town in Pampanga this December came from her stock.

She has also consigned hundreds more to the stores of her regular buyers in Tarlac, Nueva Ecija and Metro Manila.

Hard work pays off

Her hard work, honesty, patience, guts, charisma, good credit line with suppliers, and reliability as a distributor have reaped rewards.

Ten years after she ventured into the business in 1995 with only a "trike" to get her around, she now owns a van and a tricycle for purchases and delivery. These, she said, were bought on earnings, not on loans.

She took pride in being able to settle P200,000 worth of debts that were the results of being swindled once and high interests on small loans during her starting years.

In those times, Flores practically begged the owner of a local hardware store to grant her a credit line. Now, she takes materials on an unlimited scheme, proof that she has been able to pay on time.

After 2003, she stopped relying on money borrowed from relatives working abroad. She has since done business on savings generated from her usual 10-percent profit mark up.

Flores managed to do that by deferring any repair or reconstruction of her family's house on Macabacle Street in Barangay Dolores, one of three lantern-making villages in this city dubbed the "Christmas Capital" of the Philippines.

Luxury not priority

"*Huli dapat ang luho* (Luxury should come last)," said Flores.

Her house, she said, could not serve as a good measure of her entrepreneurial success as it looks more like a jail because of the metal railings in its façade.

LANTERN trader Daisy Flores flashes a winning smile this Christmas. TONETTE OREJAS/PDI CENTRAL LUZON DESK

Her 38-square meter house only has one room, enough to accommodate her, her husband and their three children. "It's better to live a simple life," she said.

She recalled that one of her customers was shocked at seeing her house.

"With the money you make, you should be able to live in a bigger house," Flores remembered her customer as telling her last year.

"For small traders like me, what is more important is make the capital grow until you're really stable," she said.

"Lantern makers and traders are like farmers. They live on debts before harvest and get little income afterwards," Flores, a management graduate from the University of the Assumption here, said.

How to beat odds

Her parents, both farmers in Mexico town, exerted their best efforts to give her an education. They allowed her to use the family's old house as a warehouse for her stocks to save on overhead costs.

"I learned from my parents that if you don't really work hard and scrimp on money, you cannot beat the odds," she said.

Flores also realized that if she worked for others, she would find it difficult to improve her life. Thus, she left her job in one of the jewelry stores in Manila and began the business by joining her husband's brothers who make lanterns.

She represents lantern traders here specializing in the marketing aspect of the business.

Like the others, her partners are those who have stuck solely to the manufacture of lanterns for home use.

There are a few who have succeeded in selling their own lanterns. They include Roland Quiambao and Rommel Garcia who specialize in the production and marketing of street lanterns.

Key is craftsmanship

Melencio Cayanan, now in his 70s, made good by making lanterns and selling these as a family-based enterprise. All of Cayanan's 13 children are in the business.

A few, like former San Fernando Mayor Virgilio Sanchez, have ventured into export and are mastering the preferences of niche markets in communities of overseas Filipinos.

Flores said the business had largely catered to the local market. She lamented though that the flood of Chinese-made decors has threatened the industry.

Lantern sales suffered a slump this year but Flores said the tradition-based business, one that is rooted in a religious art, still did well.

"I think Christmas lanterns that are made in San Fernando remained among the top choices because of their craftsmanship. I have faith in our lanterns that's why I sell them well," Flores said.

Ghosts of tsunami victims still haunt Thailand

From page A1

souls from the tsunami have already moved on and no longer haunt the beaches, but says the memorial ceremonies planned for the first anniversary will help the ghosts that remain.

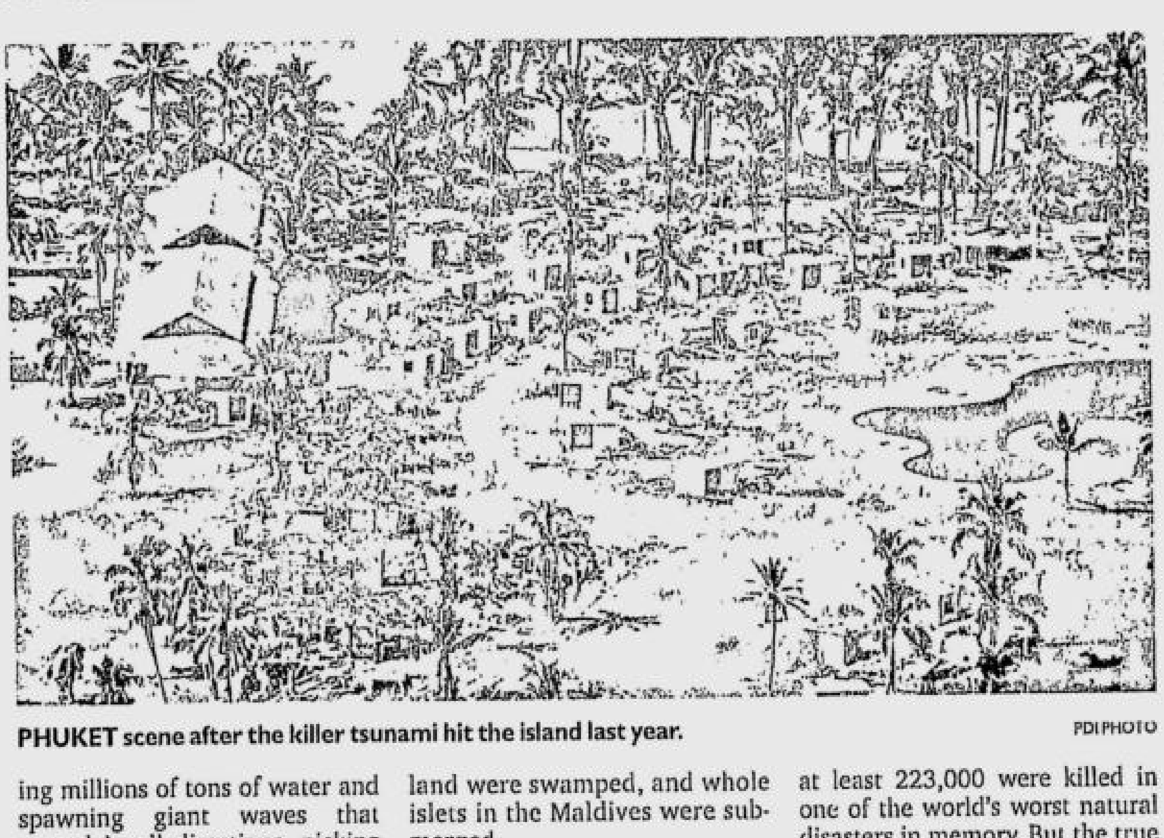
"This is good, to inform people about the tsunami, and to give ceremonies for the souls, for the ghosts that are still here. And we need to remember all of those who were here and lost their lives in the tsunami," Lungyai said.

Bird-shaped boat

On Saturday at Bang Niang beach in Thailand's Phang Nga province, hundreds of mourners placed offerings into a brightly colored, bird-shaped boat that was floated into the Andaman Sea as sea gypsies chanted and banged drums.

More interdenominational ceremonies are scheduled on Dec. 26., the first anniversary of the tsunami, with morning services on five beaches timed for the moment when the waves hit, and a larger candlelight vigil at dusk.

Exactly one year ago on Monday, the most powerful earthquake in four decades—magnitude 9—ripped apart the ocean floor off Sumatra island, displacing millions of tons of water and spawning giant waves that spread in all directions, picking up speed as they neared land.



PHUKET scene after the killer tsunami hit the island last year. PDI PHOTO

A dozen countries were hit by surging walls of water powerful enough to level buildings and sweep small ships kilometers inland. Entire villages in Indonesia and Sri Lanka were swept away, five star resorts in Thailand were swamped, and whole islets in the Maldives were submerged.

Almost 400,000 homes were destroyed on coastlines from Malaysia to east Africa. More than 2 million people were left without a place to live. The livelihoods of 1.5 million were swept away.

The United Nations estimates at least 223,000 were killed in one of the world's worst natural disasters in memory. But the true toll will probably never be known—many bodies were lost at sea and in some cases the populations of places struck were not accurately recorded.

Fear of ghosts

Fears of ghosts have kept Thais and many other Asians from returning to the tsunami-hit beaches, preferring instead to visit the Gulf of Thailand, where the deadly waves did not hit.

Sujitra Wichianirat, 35, an office worker in Bangkok, said she would still not go to the Andaman coast.

"First, I'm scared of ghosts. Second, I'm scared of tsunamis because I'm worried it might happen again. If tsunamis happen, at least we know from the tsunami warning system and I can run away from it. But for ghosts, I don't know how to escape from them," she said.

Hundreds of bodies have yet to be identified—the Disaster Victim Identification unit says it has 805 bodies or body parts from unknown victims—which Sujitra said means the dead could be reappearing as ghosts to seek help.

From the moment the tsunami hit, Thai Buddhists have turned to monks to help soothe these lost souls.

When Thais along the Andaman coast began retrieving corpses, they carried them to temples, where hundreds of bodies were kept for months as the largest international forensics team ever assembled began the ongoing work of identifying them.

Temple shelters

Temple grounds also became emergency shelters where thousands of people sought refuge after losing their homes.

Just days after the tsunami hit, monks in flowing orange robes began walking the beaches, sprinkling holy water and visiting homes and businesses for cleansing ceremonies.

Muslim, Christian and Hindu religious leaders were also invited to join prayer services and "merit-making" ceremonies, which Buddhists believe will help the souls of the dead find a better life upon their reincarnation.

Despite the fears of ghosts, Alan Oliver, an American researcher at the World Buddhist University in Bangkok, said that in general, the tsunami had not shaken the faith of Thai Buddhists.

"In Buddhism, there is no 'God did this. Why did God do this?' They see it as a natural cause. Buddhists view that life is imperfect. When a disaster like this happens, they just accept it as a natural way of things happening." *Reports from AFP and AP*

Christmas trees reflect signs of times

By Frank Cimatu
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

VIGAN CITY—PEOPLE ARE NOT DREAMING here of a white Christmas, but the Christmas trees along the highway in Northern Luzon do reflect the signs of the times.

So we have a somber San Fernando, "euphorbic" Sta. Lucia, "inabelous" Vigan and "Parisienne du Candon."

For years, the Christmas display along the plaza in San Fernando City in La Union was among the most awaited, with Tivoli lights wrapping almost all trees.

There were running lights depicting the nativity scene and colorful *parol* (Christmas lanterns) and flowers were everywhere. A provincial trade fair was usually set at the plaza to maintain the crowd.

But these days, the atmosphere in San Fernando City is more subdued. There is still a light show in the plaza, but it doesn't run as frequent as in the past.

Multicolor

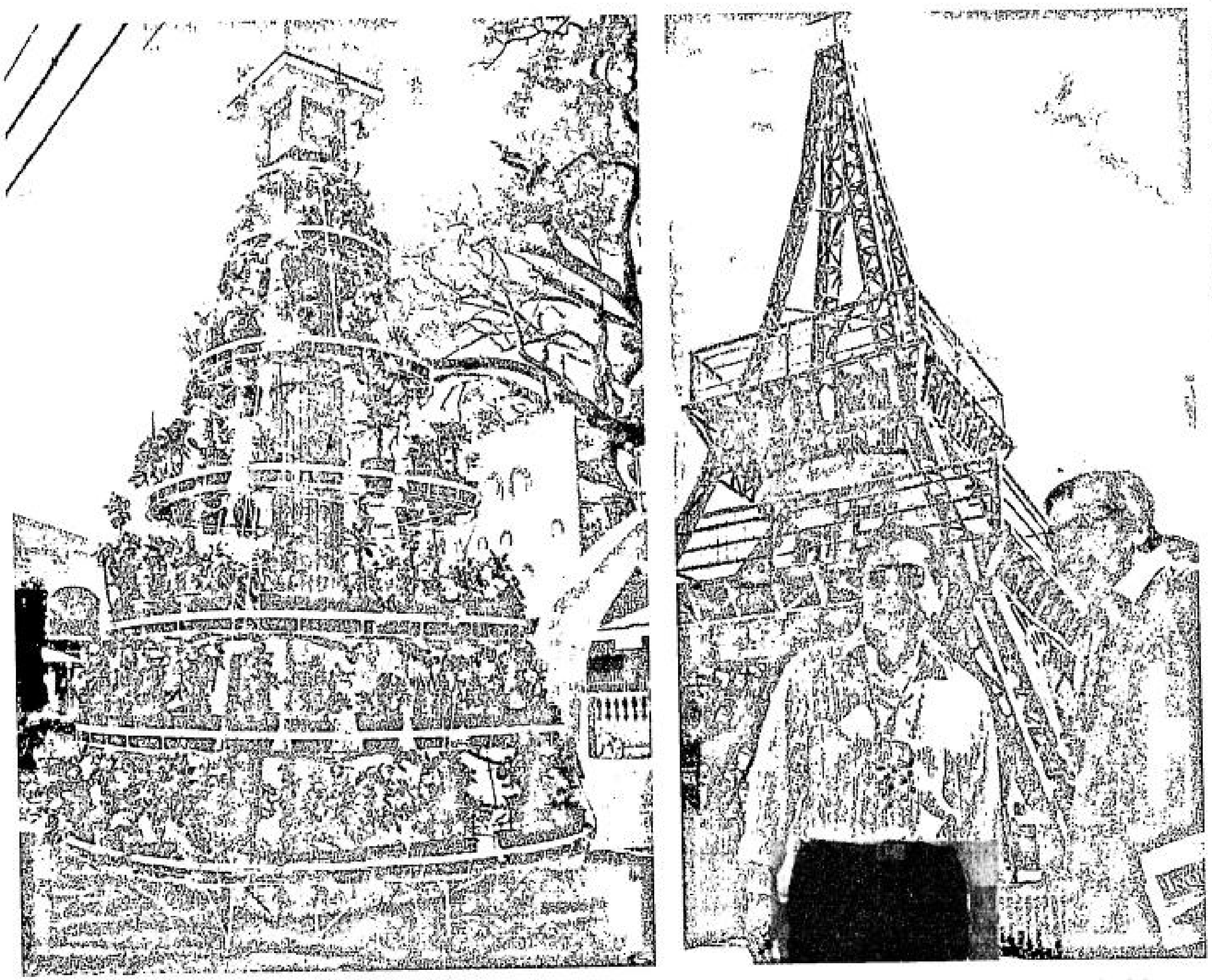
The city's Christmas tree is a cone of multicolor cellophane star *parol*, which turned out to be duplicated in other towns in the Ilocos.

Farther north in Ilocos Sur is the Christmas tree of Sta. Lucia town, which may not be as dramatic at night but is still unusual.

It is an anachronism of sorts: A Christmas tree of rows and rows of euphorbia, a succulent (water storing plant) commonly known as the "crown of thorns." So Sta. Lucia, in a way, is celebrating the birth of Christ with a plant commonly associated with His crucifixion.

'Euphorbia Capital'

Ilocos Sur had been bitten by the euphorbia craze in the past two years. This hardy succulent, characterized by its thorny stem said to have been used to crown Jesus Christ during His crucifixion, had been cultivated in Thailand and has spawned varieties with large flowers of different colors—from the common red to pink, yellow, orange and many others.



THE "EUPHORBIC" Christmas tree (left) of Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur, and the Eiffel Tower-like Christmas tree (right) of the City of Vigan, with Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson and Rep. Eric Singson in the foreground. LEONCIO BALBIN JR./PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

It is not uncommon to see houses in Sta. Lucia with a whole set of euphorbia on their porches.

Candon City is trying to market itself as the "Euphorbia Capital of the Philippines," with a euphorbia nursery being planned by the city government. But neighboring Sta. Lucia beat it to the draw by building its euphorbia Christmas tree to promote the plant.

Vigan, on the other hand, distinguished itself not only with its Christmas tree but also with its *parol*.

As unveiled during the recent celebration of Ilocos Sur Day in Intramuros, Manila, the skin of the bamboo parol are the glittery Iloco *abel* (Ilocano indigenous cloth). These lanterns, when clustered in different colors, would evoke images of Vigan.

Iloco 'abel'

The Christmas tree at the Ilocos Sur provincial capitol is also draped by yards and yards of *inabel*.

"We have been aggressively promoting the Iloco abel not only in the Philippines but in the world, and we thought this would be a charming idea," said provincial administrator Vicky Cu.

Undoubtedly the most expensive "Christmas tree" is the bamboo replica of Paris' Eiffel Tower at the plaza of Candon City.

Built for almost P500,000, it was meant to replicate a bamboo Eiffel Tower built by Ilocanos 113 years ago during the 1st Feria Exposicion de Ilocos Sur.

The present tower set at the gate of the Candon Church is still bamboo but it has a steel reinforcement.

During the Feria reenactment early this month, a rondalla of blind musicians regaled the crowd at the mezzanine. In 1892, there was also a band at the base of the tower.

Lanterns were hung on the 1892 bamboo tower while the present tower also has parol hanging on its sides.

Parade of movie stars opens Metro Manila filmfest

From page A1

Andrea del Rosario, among others. "Kutob" designer, Willy Urbino, built giant reproductions of tarot cards and put up white flags bearing tarot symbols like the sword, wand and chalice.

Production designer Edgar Martin Littaua built three floats for Regal Entertainment this year.

Littaua said the pagoda-inspired float of the comedy film "Ako Legal Wife" took two weeks to make. He decorated it with Chinese lanterns and charms.

Littaua was also in charge of constructing the "Shake, Rattle and Roll 6" float, where he recreated a giant mythical bird and other menacing characters from the film.

Pink fences

The "Blue Moon" float carried a huge war plane. Its lead actor, Mark Herras, plays the role of a pilot during the Second World War, said Littaua. The movie also features Jennylyn Mercado, Paulene Luna, Eddie Garcia and Dennis Trillo.

Mila Nepomuceno, float designer of Ronnie Rickets' "Lagot Ka sa Kuya Ko," used old car parts from junkyards and fashioned an almost authentic reproduction of the infamous MMDA pink fences.

"In the movie, Ronnie portrays a taxi driver who always gets into trouble with traffic enforcers," she explained.

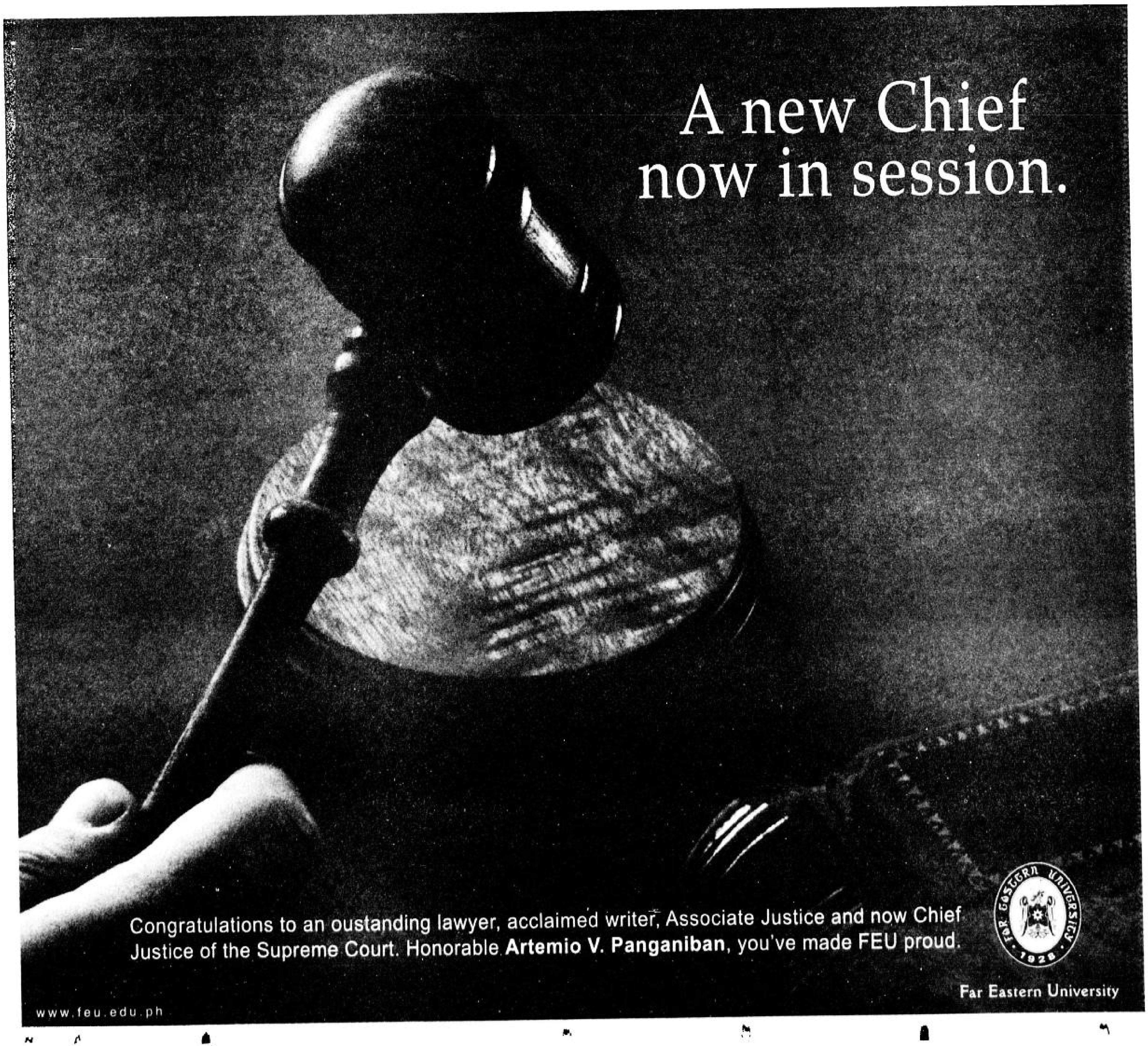
Stars on a float

Yellow, pink and blue were the dominant colors of Team Work/Zennet World Productions' "Mourning Girls" float. It carried actors Glydel Mercado, Chin-Chin Gutierrez, Assunta de Rossi, Juliana Palermo and Ricky Davao among others.

The "Terrorist Hunter" float carried a what else—an airplane bombed by terrorists. Eddie Garcia stars in the movie.

The Best Float will get P500,000, the second-placer will receive P350,000 and the third-placer, P150,000.

The winner will be announced at the "Gabi ng Parangal" on Jan. 6 at the Aliw Theater.



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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

KAYTLYN Skau wears the camouflage jacket of her brother, Sgt. Timothy Skau who returned to the US after serving in Iraq. AP

US set to shrink troops in Iraq

FALLUJA, IRAQ—US DEFENSE SECRETARY DONALD RUMSfeld said on Friday the number of US combat forces in Iraq would be cut by some 7,000 by early next year, but the numbers involved in training Iraq's new military would increase.

Army Gen. George Casey, the US commander in Iraq, later told reporters that the US force would be reduced to a new baseline of about 130,000 from the current standard level of 138,000.

Rumsfeld, the second senior US official to visit Iraq this week in the wake of Iraq's parliamentary election, said progress in Iraq's politics, economics and security lay behind the decision to scale back the combat troops.

"President (George W.) Bush has authorized an adjustment in US combat brigades in Iraq from 17 to 15," Rumsfeld said, addressing US troops at a military camp east of Falluja.

"This will include increases in the number of US forces involved in transition teams, intelligence support, and logistics, to assist the Iraqi security forces in continuing to assume greater responsibility for the security of their country."

"The adjustment being announced today is a recognition of the Iraqi people's progress in assuming added responsibility for their country," Rumsfeld said, adding that the US and Iraqi governments would evaluate the troop situation as they go.

Casey said he did not have a target for troop withdrawals by the end of next year, but added that a further reduction was likely in the spring when he reviews the situation again.

"This is going to be a measured and gradual process that will play out over the next year or two," he said, adding that the cut back was part of broader strategy to gradually hand over security powers to the Iraqi military.

"It's a step on the way to total independence for Iraqi security forces which will be some time down the road," he said.

Reuters

Italy nears deal with New York's Met on looted art

ROME—ITALY IS CLOSE TO A DEAL WITH New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art on the return of disputed antiquities in the latest chapter of a saga that has turned a spotlight on the international trade in stolen art.

Italy's Culture Minister Rocco Buttiglione said on Friday that talks with Met director Philippe de Montebello about an ancient bowl and silverware that Italians say were looted had taken a significant "step forward."

"An agreement with the Metropolitan is reasonably likely," Buttiglione said at a news conference.

"The museum's board is due to give us a reply by January." The Met's negotiations with Italy are being closely watched by the international art world because authorities have accused another eight US museums, including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Los Angeles' Getty Museum, of owning stolen antiquities.

Buttiglione unveiled on Friday the three latest looted works returned from the United States: a giant head of Roman Emperor Trajan, dating from the 15th century, and two 18th century paintings by Andrea Appiani. Both were seized by US customs officials at Christie's auction house in New York.

To date, the Getty has felt the fullest force of Italy's assault on the illegal art trade with a former curator, Marion True, standing trial in Rome on charges she conspired with dealers trafficking in stolen antiquities.

Buttiglione said he wanted the Met to return to Italy two of the most prized works in its antiquities collection: 3rd century BC silverware from Sicily's Morgantina site and the Euphronios *krater*, a red-figured vase from the 6th century BC.

The Met's De Montebello has said he is ready to return the art works if they were found to have been looted. He had requested proof of the Italian provenance of the pieces and said the board also needed to approve the decision, Buttiglione said.

For many of the other disputed works in the Met's collection Italy has suggested an extended loan of longer than a decade.

"We recognize that the United States is poor in terms of antiquities," Buttiglione said.

Tomb raiders have looted antiquities in Italy for centuries but Buttiglione has spearheaded an aggressive campaign to have returned art works stolen after 1939. Italy passed a law in that year stating that ancient artifacts from digs belong to the state.

Reuters

"THE YOUNG John the Baptist" an early 17th century sculpture originally thought to have been done by Michelangelo is one of some 400 pieces recently acquired by the National Gallery of Art in Washington. AP

UN votes for budget, averts crisis

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN GENERAL ASsembly late on Friday passed a budget with an unprecedented spending cap aimed at pressuring countries into approving management and other reforms within six months.

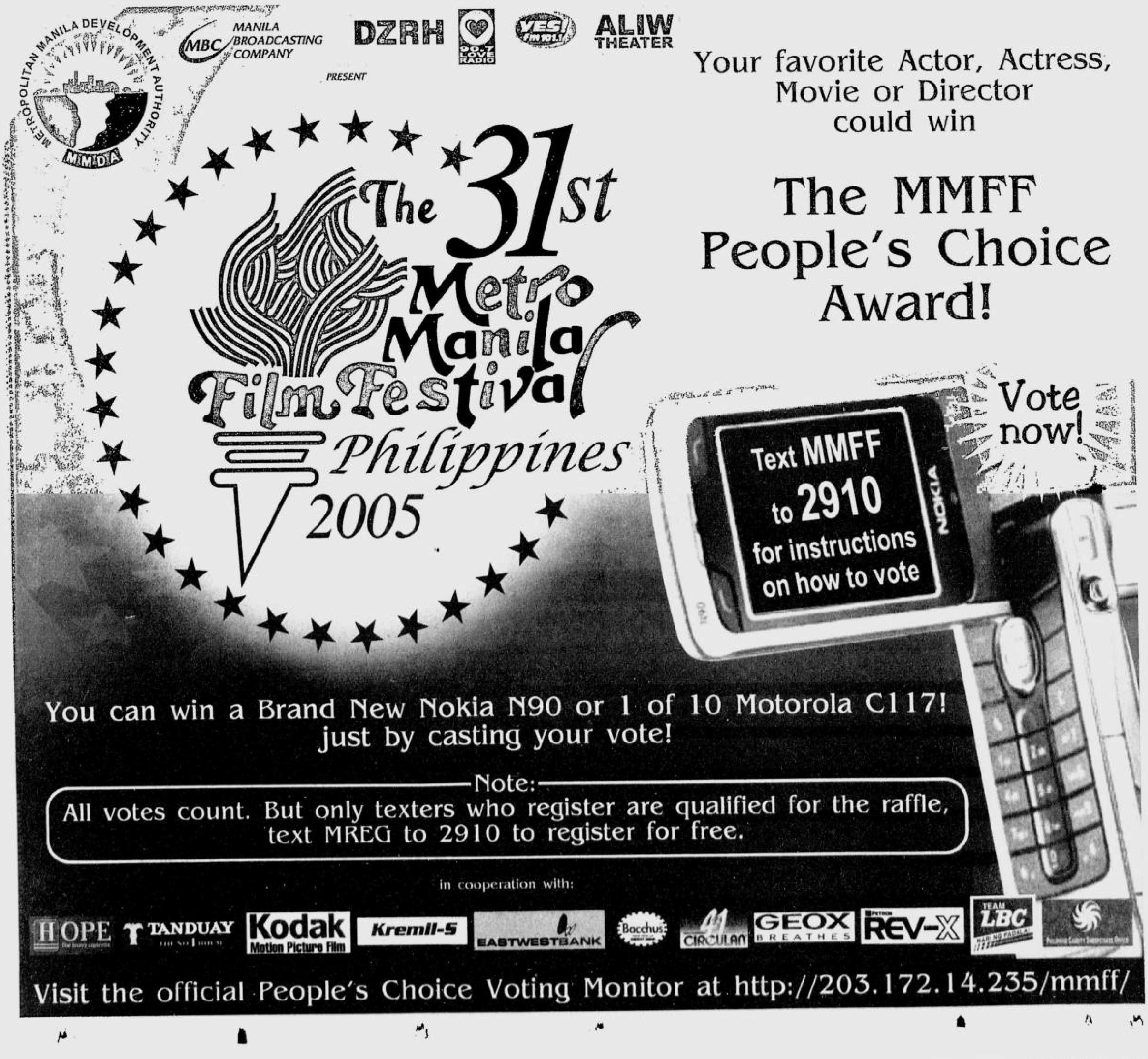
Under the deal between wealthy and developing nations, the assembly adopted a resolution for a two-year, $3.8 billion administrative budget, thereby averting a financial crisis.

But the resolution capped UN spending at $950 million—enough only for the first six months of 2006—after which Secretary-General Kofi Annan has to ask the assembly for more funds to pay staff.

The 191-nation General Assembly's decision, after months of arduous negotiations, was taken by consensus, without a vote.

Several nations, including Egypt, India and Jamaica, refused to link reforms to the budget. But US Ambassador John Bolton said this was implicit since the assembly would have to approve additional funding in six months time.

Reuters



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Report: US spied for nuke bombs on Muslim sites

WASHINGTON—US OFFICIALS HAVE SEcretly monitored radiation levels at Muslim sites, including mosques and private homes, since Sept. 11, 2001 as part of a top secret program searching for nuclear bombs, US News and World Report said on Friday.

The news magazine said in its online edition that the far-reaching program covered more than a hundred sites in the Washington, D.C., area and at least five other cities.

"In numerous cases, the monitoring required investigators to go on to the property under surveillance, although no search warrants or court orders were ever obtained, according to those with knowledge of the program," the magazine said.

The report comes a week after revelations that the Bush administration had authorized eavesdropping on people in the United States. US President George W. Bush has defended that covert program and vowed to continue the practice, saying it was vital to protect the country.

Senior US officials, including FBI Director Robert Mueller, have repeatedly said Islamic militants appeared intent on acquiring weapons of mass destruction for an attack against the United States.

Mueller said in February he was "very concerned with the growing body of sensitive reporting that continues to show al-Qaida's clear intention to obtain and ultimately use some form of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high-energy explosives material in its attacks against America."

An FBI spokesperson declined to confirm or deny the US News and World Report article and said, "We can't talk about a classified program."

"The FBI's overriding priority is to prevent, disrupt and defeat terrorist operations in the US. All investigations and operations conducted by the FBI are intelligence driven and predicated on specific information about potential criminal acts or terrorist threats, and are conducted in strict conformance with federal law," he added.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations advocacy group said the report, coupled with news of the domestic eavesdropping, "could lead to the perception that we are no longer a nation ruled by law, but instead one in which fear trumps constitutional rights."

"All Americans should be concerned about the apparent trend toward a two-tiered system of justice, with full rights for most citizens, and another diminished set of rights for Muslims," it said in a statement.

Federal officials cited by US News and World Report maintained the program was legal and said warrants were not needed for the kind of radiation sampling it conducted. *Reuters*

S. Korea fraud shakes stem cell field

SAN FRANCISCO—CONCERN HEIGHTened Friday in medical circles that a spectacular scientific cloning fraud that hid in plain sight has set back legitimate stem cell work around the world.

Shaken cloning experts and stem cell scientists said research in the potentially revolutionary field of regenerative medicine will continue unabated. But they said public confidence in their work had been weakened by a sham branded by experts as the most visible case of scientific fraud they could recall.

Scientists also struggled to explain how they didn't earlier catch the charismatic South Korean veterinarian's claim in a Science paper published in May that he cloned 11 human embryos to produce stem cells.

"That's a difficult one," said Keith Campbell, the University of Nottingham researcher who helped clone Dolly the sheep in 1997. "Scientists are asked to referee a lot of papers and to a certain extent we have to believe each other as to the validity of the data."

A disgraced Hwang Woo-suk resigned from Seoul National University on Friday after the school said the researcher fabricated groundbreaking cloning and stem cell research that had raised hopes of new cures for hard-to-treat diseases.

When Hwang published findings in February 2004 and again in May, it was believed he had developed a new cloning method that enabled him to accomplish something no one else had.

Hwang chalked up much of the success to South Korean government support and dedicated researchers working around the clock. He also credited his workers' dexterity with chopsticks; stem cell researchers visited from around the world and rushed back to their labs to try the new technique.

The journal Science said it would retract the May paper and investigate Hwang's 2004 paper that claimed the first cloned human embryo.

"It's a stain on the honor and integrity of the whole field," said Dr. Robert Lanza, a cloning expert at the biotechnology company Advanced Cell Technology. "It has sent a lot of scientists on a wild goose chase and down false paths."

Stem cells are created in the first days after conception and mature into every cell in the human body. Scientists hope to use stem cells as replacement parts for failing organs and to treat diabetes, Parkinson's and other diseases.

Researchers want to harvest stem cells by cloning the DNA of sick people, so they could turn the cells into tissue that genetically matches a patient. That way, the patient wouldn't have to take the antirejection drugs used in organ transplants today. Also, researchers hope to use cloned stem cells to study how diseases begin and develop.

No researcher in the United States is known to be actively trying to clone a human embryo, though two teams at Harvard University have asked school officials for permission.

Doug Melton, who leads one of the Harvard cloning projects, vowed Friday that the work will continue despite the scandal.

"This sad news from Korea in no way weakens our belief in all the demonstrably valid experiments indicating that stem cell science holds the promise of eventually providing the basis of treatments and cures for numerous presently intractable chronic diseases," Melton said in an e-mail. "It simply means that we still need to take important steps we thought had already been taken."

Two experts in scientific misconduct called the Hwang scandal the most visible case of scientific fraud they could think of.

That's because unlike many other cases, Hwang's purported achievement drew so much public attention in the first place, said Nicholas Steneck of the University of Michigan.

"His research was front-page research, and then it was discovered that he falsified. Most of the other ones, it's that they falsified that made it front-page research," he said. *AP*

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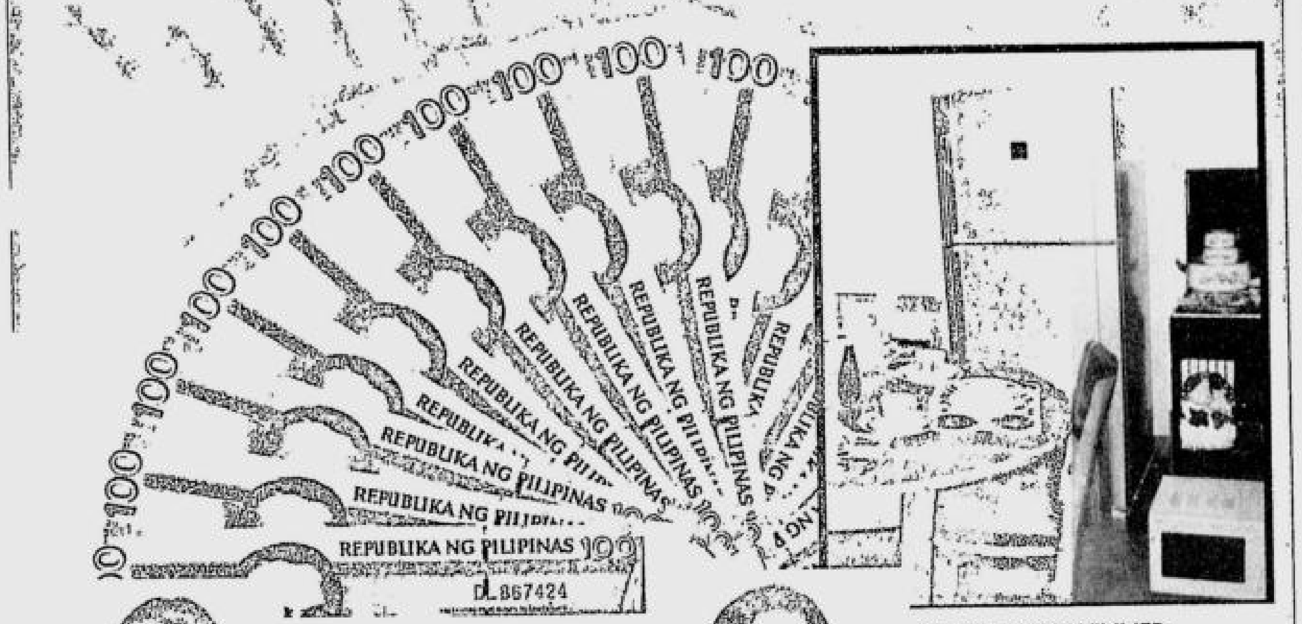

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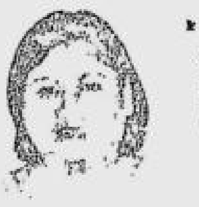

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One year after, tsunami toll remains elusive

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA—BUSTARI Mansyur shrugs wearily when asked how many bodies his workers retrieved from the mangled wreckage of last December's tsunami. The question seems irrelevant.

"There were so many bodies, we could not count," concedes the chair of the Aceh chapter of the Indonesian Red Cross, which took on an unofficial role as body-counter in the days after the disaster.

"On the first, second, third day—there were a lot of bodies. We don't know how many—the government, until now, does not know."

The Dec. 26 tsunami slammed mercilessly into coastlines around the Indian Ocean, resulting in devastation so complete that skeletons are still being retrieved as the grim cleanup labors on a year afterwards.

The most widely accepted estimates of the final toll add up to around 220,000. But significantly different figures are still being offered: the Roman Catholic charity Caritas Internationalis suggested Wednesday that closer to 400,000 lives were claimed.

Entire villages were obliterated—leaving no one to report deaths—while buses and cars were sucked out to sea. Bodies were buried rapidly without identification amid fears that a second wave of disease would hit survivors.

Records from many wiped out areas, already mired in poverty and stricken by deadly conflicts, were frequently patchy at best.

In Indonesia, the Jakarta-based spokesperson for the Red Cross said that it planned to release a report later this month on its work in Aceh, which would include a toll. Finalizing one, however, is no longer a priority.

"We are continuing our tracing and mailing program consistently but our focus is now to rebuild Aceh and move beyond body count," Hadi Kuswoyo said.

In a June report, the Red Cross said 131,029 were killed and 37,066 missing. Satkorlak, the government agency tasked with coordinating responses to disasters, puts the number of dead at 130,013, but has the same missing figure.

A post-tsunami census carried out in devastated Aceh province, meanwhile, found that 4,031,589 people were now living in Indonesia's westernmost province, down by 238,411 on the figure compiled before national elections in October 2004, though officials drew no conclusions.

In Sri Lanka, estimates of the dead range from 21,000 to 41,000 people and officials admit that double-counting and confusion immediately after the disaster may have distorted figures.

Police records show that 20,936 people were killed and police maintain that only 421 people are still reported missing. Aid agencies however cite a figure of 31,000, based on a report from the social services ministry.

Secretary to the ministry of public security, Tilak Ranaviraja, gives a figure of 41,000 but says the number could be even higher.

Official records in India say the final death toll is 10,749, with 5,640 still missing, mostly on the Andaman islands but figures from different agencies there have also been conflicting.

Thailand has an official toll of 5,395 dead and 2,817 missing, but these figures have yet to be reconciled with the work of a Disaster Victim Identification unit, which has been steadily scratching names off a list of missing and returning remains to families.

The DVI says it has 673 names left on its list of the missing, but it has 805 bodies or parts of bodies that still need identification.

Col. Khemarin Hassiri, the police official heading the forensics effort, said the tsunami probably killed many who were in the country illegally—such as workers from Burma—who were never reported missing. *AFP*

Key events of 2005

PARIS—MAJOR WORLD EVENTS OF THE year, to Dec. 15:

January

Countries around the Indian Ocean struggle to cope with the effects of the tsunami that devastated coastlines in 11 countries on Dec. 26, 2004. The estimated death toll eventually rises to 217,000, with Indonesia's Aceh province the hardest hit.

Mahmud Abbas is elected to replace the late Yasser Arafat as Palestinian leader.

George W. Bush is sworn in for a second term as president of the United States.

The US administration officially gives up the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. That country holds elections, which are won by Shiite and Kurdish parties. The violence continues.

February

King Gyanendra of Nepal dismisses his country's government and enforces a state of emergency aimed at crushing a Maoist insurgency.

Defying the United States, North Korea says it has nuclear weapons.

Former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is killed in a massive bomb blast in Beirut. The attack is widely blamed on Syria, which later pulls its troops out of Lebanon.

The UN's Kyoto Treaty on climate change officially comes into force eight years after it was signed. But neither the United States nor China have ratified it.

March

An Italian journalist held hostage in Iraq is released, but US troops open fire on her vehicle, injuring her and killing her Italian rescuer.

The US administration nominates John Bolton, a noted hawk and critic of the United Nations, as its ambassador to the world body. He takes up his post in August. Paul Wolfowitz, another US neo-conservative, becomes head of the World Bank.

US President George W. Bush signs extraordinary legislation aimed at keeping alive a comatose and severely brain-damaged woman, Terry Schiavo, whose case has been a political football for years. She dies after lower courts refuse to reconnect her feeding tube.

In the Russian republic of Chechnya, officials announce the killing of Aslan Maskhadov, a radical rebel leader.

Kyrgyzstan becomes the latest former Soviet republic to have its leader overthrown by a popular movement.

April

Roman Catholic leader Pope John Paul II dies aged 84 after struggling for years against illness. He is replaced by German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who becomes Pope Benedict XVI.

The party of Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe wins another election, amid widespread allegations of fraud.

Mass protests take place in China over what is seen as Japan's refusal to face up to its wartime past.

Britain's Prince Charles weds longtime sweetheart Camilla Parker Bowles, and Monaco's Prince Rainier dies, to be replaced by his son Albert.

The Airbus A380, the world's biggest passenger plane, makes its first test flight in France.

The first bus service in 60 years runs between the two halves of divided Kashmir.

May

Tony Blair becomes the first ever British Labour leader to win a third term for his party, albeit with a reduced majority.

Celebrations mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe; US President George W. Bush visits both the east and the west of the continent.

The United States defends itself against accusations that guards in the Guantanamo Bay prison camp in Cuba desecrated a Muslim holy book.

Troops in the central Asian state of Uzbekistan open fire on protesters, killing hundreds according to human rights groups.

China announces emergency measures to combat bird flu, which could potentially spark a devastating pandemic among humans.

French voters conclusively reject the proposed European Constitution Treaty, and the Dutch deliver a similar verdict a week later.

June

The president of Bolivia resigns amid protests calling for the country's water industry to be renationalized.

The African Union opens talks aimed at ending the murderous conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan, while the International Criminal Court opens an investigation into war crimes there.

US pop star Michael Jackson is acquitted on charges of sexually abusing children.

China agrees to limit its textile exports to the European Union, amid tension in many countries over the ending of a quota arrangement.

Hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is elected president of Iran.

July

London is named as the host city for the 2012 Olympic Games.

With militant rock concerts providing a backdrop, Group of Eight leaders meet in Scotland and agree to a debt forgiveness deal for Africa. But the summit is overshadowed by coordinated bomb blasts which kill a total of 56 people in London, in suicide attacks later found to have

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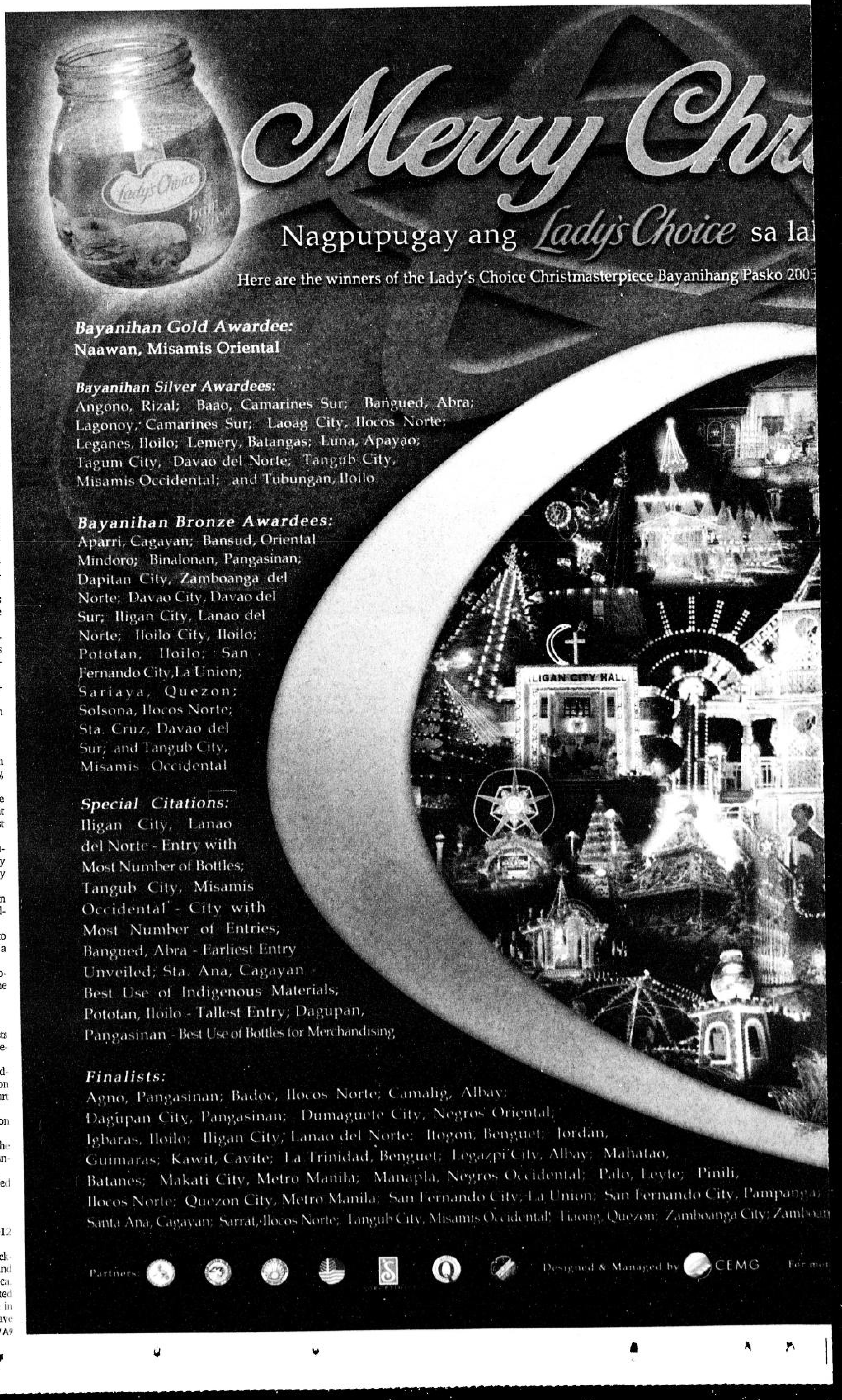

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Bayanihan Bronze Awardees:
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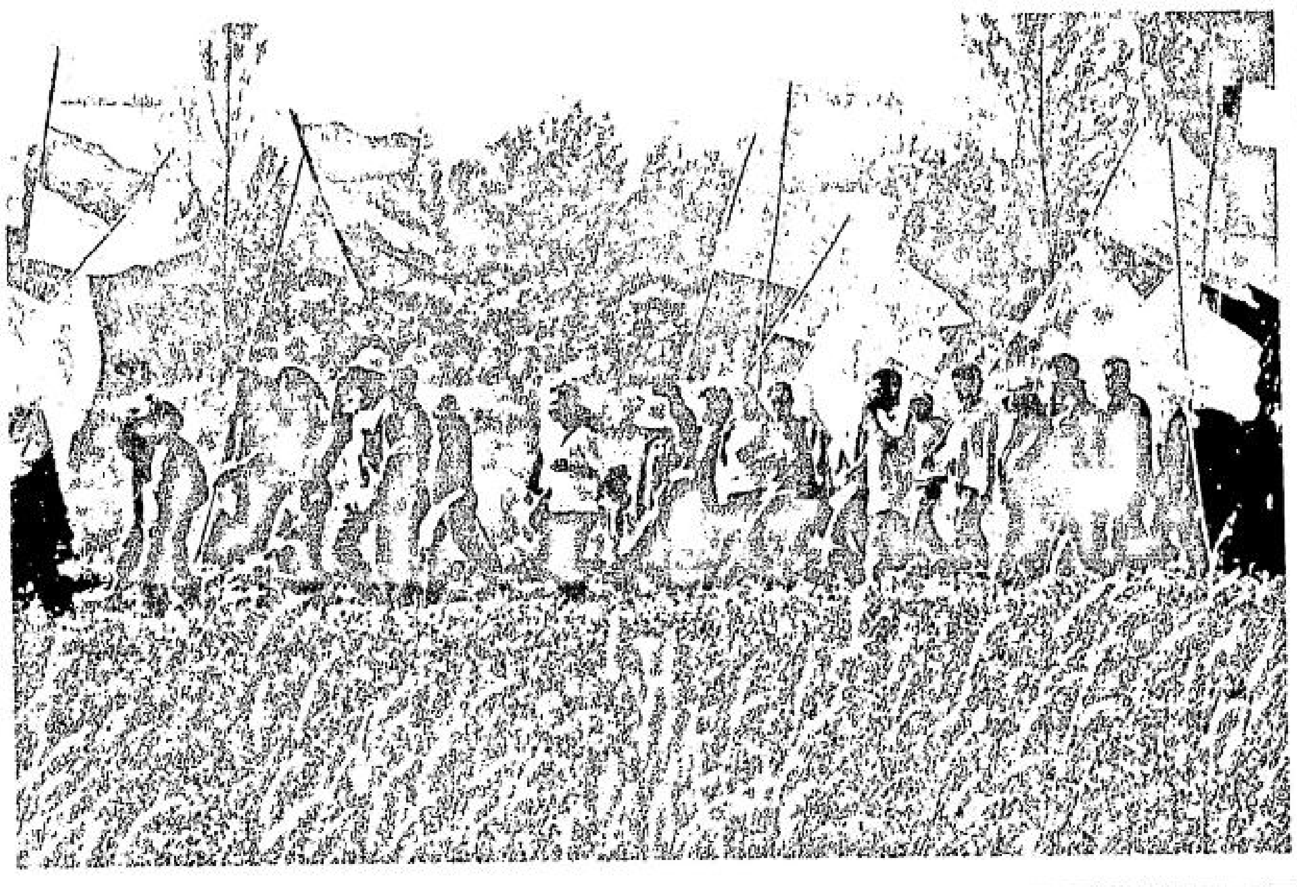

THAI villagers holding colorful flags make their way to Bang Niang beach Dec. 24 for a memorial ceremony for last December's tsunami victims in southern Thailand. AP

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Key events of 2005

From page A8

been carried out by four British Muslims.

In yet another devastating bomb attack in Iraq, suicide attackers kill 32 children in Baghdad as US troops are handing out sweets. A British study estimates that almost 25,000 Iraqi civilians have died in violence since the invasion in 2003.

The United Nations condemns Zimbabwe for a controversial slum clearance project.

Multiple bombings kill 88 people in an Egyptian Red Sea tourist resort.

In London, armed police hunting terrorists shoot dead an unarmed Brazilian man in a train.

The Irish Republican Army says it is giving up its armed campaign and becoming an ordinary political movement.

Aid workers struggle to combat a famine in the west African state of Niger.

August

Saudi ruler King Fahd dies and is replaced by his half-brother Abdullah.

A videotape shows a top al-Qaida leader threatening Britain and the United States with more attacks.

Citizens of the Japanese city of Hiroshima mark the 60th anniversary of its destruction by a US atomic bomb.

A US space shuttle flies for the first time since an accident in 2003.

The United States and the European Union issue the first of a series of warnings to Iran over what they suspect are moves to build a nuclear bomb.

A wildcat strike in support of workers at a catering firm causes massive disruption at London's main airport.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is forced to apologize for a corruption scandal.

In one of several major air disasters during the year, all 121 people aboard a Cypriot airliner die when it crashes in Greece after suffering a sudden loss of cabin pressure.

In its first-ever unilateral withdrawal from an occupied territory, Israel pulls its settlers out of the Gaza Strip.

Fires aggravated by parched conditions rage over much of southern Europe, with Portugal suffering the most.

The storm season in the Gulf of Mexico proves to be a record-breaker. One of the biggest hurricanes, Katrina, breaks through levees protecting the US city of New Orleans, causing massive floods that kill at least 500 people and reveal woefully inadequate disaster preparations, particularly for the large majority of the population who are poor and black.

Oil prices go over $70 a barrel in New York.

Almost 1,000 pilgrims die in a stampede on a Baghdad bridge, apparently sparked by rumors that there were suicide bombers among them.

September

An airliner crashes onto a residential area in Indonesia, killing at least 150 people.

President Viktor Yushchenko, leader of the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine, fires his entire government over a corruption scandal.

Veteran leader Hosni Mubarak scores an easy win in the first Egyptian elections open to more than one candidate.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi wins a snap election called over plans to privatize the country's post office.

Rebels in Indonesia's Aceh province begin handing over their guns under a peace agreement.

An election results in deadlock in Germany, with the conservatives under Angela Merkel ahead of the outgoing Social Democrats but without enough seats to form a stable coalition. Over two months of horse-trading ensue before Merkel becomes the country's first-ever woman chancellor.

Afghanistan holds parliamentary elections.

US Army private Lynndie England gets three years in jail for her role in the torture of detainees in Iraq.

John Roberts is sworn in as chief justice of the US Supreme Court, after the death of William Rehnquist.

October

The European Union opens membership talks with Turkey.

A massive earthquake hits divided Kashmir. Over 70,000 people die and millions more are homeless in a remote region with winter approaching.

An estimated 2,000 people die when a tropical storm triggers mudslides and floods in Guatemala.

China sends two astronauts into orbit on its second manned space mission.

European countries take measures to stem the arrival of avian flu, believed to be carried by migrating birds.

Russian special forces intervene after an attack by militants on the Caucasus city of Nalchik kills over 100 people.

Iraq holds a referendum on its constitution, which is a adopted despite a "No" campaign among Sunni Muslims.

Former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein goes on trial in Baghdad over crimes committed during his reign. He defiantly pleads not guilty.

The death toll for US troops in Iraq passes the 2,000 mark, with opposition to the war mounting at home.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran calls for Israel to be "wiped off the map," the first of several such statements.

A top aide to US Vice President Dick Cheney is indicted over a leak aimed at stemming criticism of the war in Iraq.

Rosa Parks, a black woman who came to symbolize the struggle for US civil rights when she refused to give up her bus seat here to a white man, dies aged 92.

Rioting breaks out in poor suburbs of Paris, and later spreads to other cities. Over three weeks some 9,000 vehicles and numerous buildings are gutted by fire. *(To be continued.)* AFP

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OPINION

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Day One

EDITORIAL

LET US TALK STRAIGHT. THE TRUTHS OF THE Christian faith are still so startling we prefer, intuitively, to avert our gaze, or talk about something else. This is not a failing of the Filipino; this is characteristic of the human condition.

In the Christian tradition, the savior of the world was born in dire poverty, as one of the "*anawim*," the desperately poor. It could not have been a mere accident of history; Christians believe that the bleakness of the first Christmas was part of God's very design.

But look around us, here or in any other part of the world that celebrates Christmas. Is poverty central to the celebration? The answer must be "No." There are good souls, perhaps, even entire communities, that have recovered this part of the original meaning of Christmas. But by and large, it is not lack which defines our celebration, but excess.

Here's a clue. We have, quite literally, deodorized Christmas. Luke 2, the Christmas narrative on which most of our Christmas stories are based, mentions "manger" thrice; it is where the infant Jesus was laid, "in swaddling clothes," after birth. It could not have been an ideal crib.

A manger is an open box or trough out of which horses or cattle eat. This is the detail that leads Christians to believe that the God-man they are named after was born in a stable, there being "no more room at the inn." But is there anything in the various ways we mark Christmas Day, at the beginning of the third millennium, that even acknowledges the offensive smells, the cloying organic perfume, of that lowly stable, of that hastily washed manger?

Poverty is not only an assault on one's dignity; it is also an attack on the senses, the olfactory above all. But because we cannot stand too much reality, we have airbrushed this and other inconvenient details from our picture-perfect Christmas postcards.

By all means we should celebrate Christmas. It is the day Christians believe was hallowed for all time by God's ultimate gift: His own Son. At the very least the Christian world should give thanks.

But put that way (as God's self-emptying, in theology's beautifully evocative phrase), anyone can see that Christ's birth will lead, inexorably, to his life-giving death.

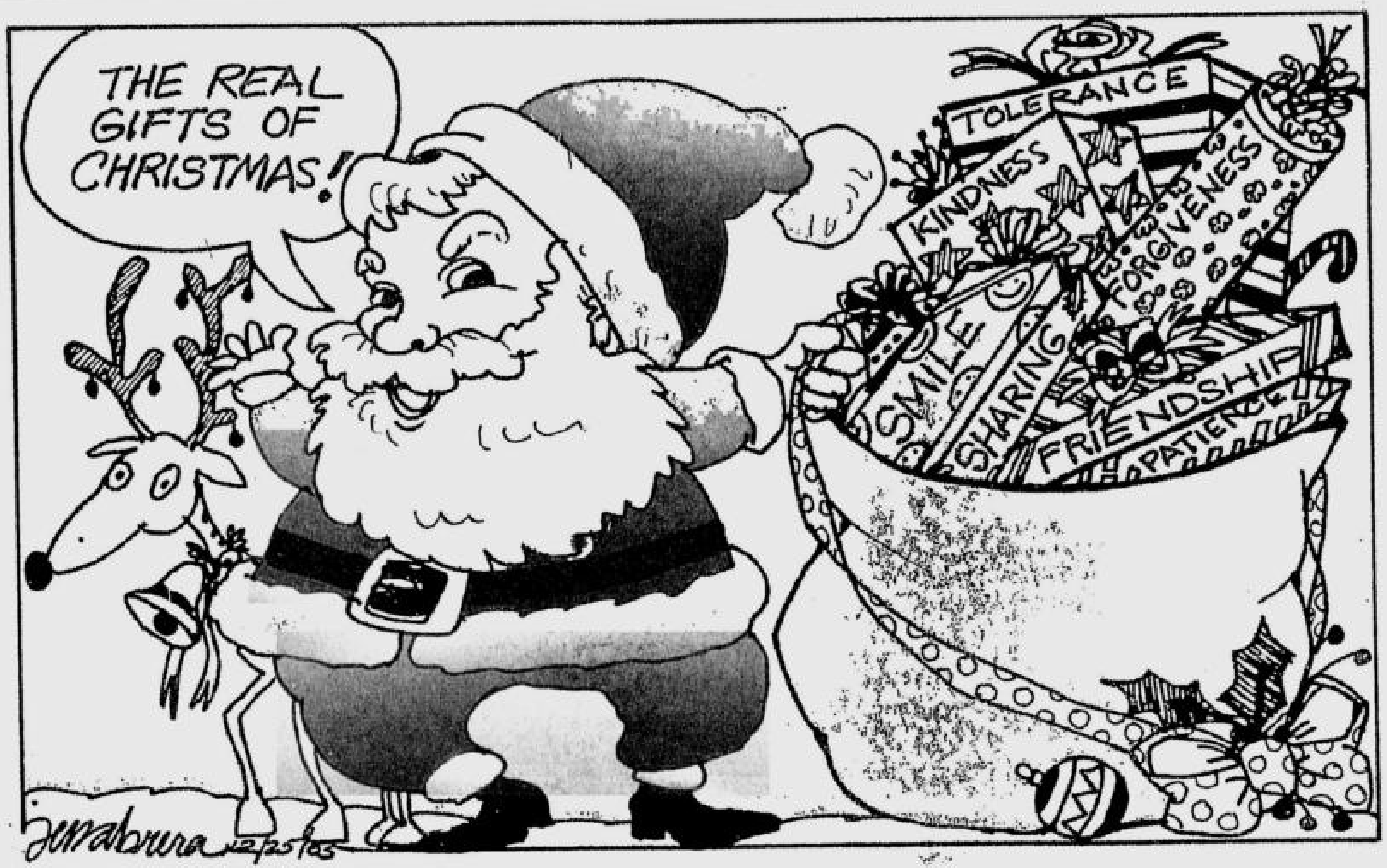
The clue is right there, in the manger. That is, the manger itself is a gentle foreshadowing of what is to come. From Day One, we know that the infant Jesus will grow up to be the sacrificial Lamb of God; he will be used to feed God's innumerable sheep (and maybe a few stray horses and cattle too).

In other words, the gift of the incarnation—God becoming man—cannot be separated from another gift: Christ's passion and eventual resurrection.

The poverty, the reduced circumstances, of the first Christmas remind us of these twin gifts. They come together. The first humans to hear of the good news are another reminder: They were shepherds, "living in the fields." We might call them temps today: People with uncertain, difficult jobs, working unholy hours, with no benefits to speak of. Again, the evangelist's theme is clear: The day the anointed one was born was marked by the lack of material wealth and certainty.

To be sure, Luke also writes about the angels, "a multitude of the heavenly host," who appear in the sky singing the newborn's praises and then "return" to "heaven." And his description of the shepherds wonderfully captures their great surprise and greater joy; they hurry to "see this event which the Lord has made known to us." It is the making-haste of a believer, a beloved.

Recognizing the general dearth of the first Christmas does not mean marking the event glumly, like poor cousins grudgingly invited to a rich relative's birthday party. It is in fact to celebrate it with greater joy, because we understand it a little bit more. It is to accept life as it really is, not sugarcoated by an unhealthy and ultimately frustrated emphasis on the Santas of this world, but one lived—as Christians believe—by a God humble enough, loving enough, to become like us. It is also to embrace the very source of hope. To paraphrase another saint: If God, who was born poor, is with us, who can be against us?



Peace on this wounded world

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE A HOMILY BECAUSE I am not a preacher. As an ordinary worshiper, and not an exemplary one at that, I just want to be part of the celebration of Christmas on this holy day as the loveliest feast of Christendom.

This day is not only for the Christians, the Catholics and the Protestants, the members of the Church of England and of the Russian Orthodox Church and their various sects and denominations. All of them are offering their reverence to the Son of God who was born in a manger in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago.

In the celebration of this hallowed event, the Christians are joined by peoples of different faiths—the Muslims, the Jews, the Buddhists, the followers of Confucius and the members of Hare Krishna, among many others—who must also sense the joy we feel over that silent night when Jesus Christ was born. They are also lighting lanterns like us, not in their temples and synagogues and mosques, but in their quiet hearts.

The birth of Jesus proclaimed the eternal message of peace on earth and goodwill to all men for which the new-born Babe was to be known to the prayerful followers of His divine will. On that holy night when he began his earthly life, there was happiness among the pure in heart for they knew that the Redeemer had arrived. He was the Messiah the angel Gabriel promised the Virgin Mary who would cleanse the world of sin.

Sadly, however, that ideal for which the Infant Lord was born as the angels sang their songs of joy, has yet to be attained. Since the last 2,000 years when the first Christmas exalted the simple shepherds on that ancient hill, the world has been stained with the blood of warfare and longing in vain for the blessings of eternal peace.

The last century alone, to take the most recent example, was devastated by two World Wars that claimed the lives of millions of innocent victims. Most of them were vigorous young men who could have contributed to the welfare of mankind if they had been allowed the right to live in peace.

There was the civil war in Spain; Italy annexed Ethiopia; the British fought with Argentina over the Falkland Island; the IRA continued its resistance to the London government; India and Pakistan escalated their border disputes; Korea split into the communist North and the democratic South; China invaded Tibet, Japan invaded China, and Russia invaded Afghanistan. Iraq marched against Kuwait and the United Nations stopped the aggressor on its bully tracks.

And the animosities have exploded into this young century, with the 9/11 attack on the United States starting a new kind of war, this time against the evils of terrorism. This is not aimed against specific countries or identifiable enemies and is waged on a massive but secret battleground throughout the globe against the suicidal predators. The subjugation of Iraq by the United States has spawned a vicious insurgency against the American occupants in a political and religious struggle to the death. The brutal treatment of suspected terrorists in American jails has been exposed to the abject shame of the land of the free.

The contagion of violence has not spared our amiable country, which was occupied by the Spaniards, the English, the Americans, and the Japanese during tragic chapters in our unhappy history. Now that we are supposed to be a sovereign country, Filipinos are fighting fellow Filipinos and not alien carpetbaggers in search of gold and oil. The NPA, the MNLF, the Abu Sayyaf, and the other lawless elements who are despoiling our lovely land for plain mercenary greed have disrobed their supposed political creeds of all pretense or semblance of nobility for all to see and to condemn.

The violence continues here as elsewhere in the world in disdainful dismissal of the call first heard on Christmas Day when the Babe was born as a mortal child.

Yet, despite the continuing tragedy bedeviling the whole of mankind, we are not distressed or hopelessly overcome. The struggle for the universal peace that has eluded us all these many centuries since the birth of the Son of God has not yielded to the drums of war. Their threnody has not dinned the suffering belligerents into silence and surrender. Christians and peoples of other faiths are still singing Christmas carols today and bringing cheer to the wounded but still undefeated world.

The added message of Christmas on this day and age is hope—hope for the best, hope for the future, and hope undiminished for the fulfillment of the promise the angels sang in Bethlehem of peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

A very Merry Christmas to one and all, Christians and other worshipers alike!

It's HIS birthday

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A LITTLE BOY who was asked if he got everything he wanted for Christmas. The boy answered, "No, but it's OK. After all, Christmas is Jesus' birthday, not mine."

* * *

In today's Gospel (Jn. 1, 1-8), we are reminded of the Incarnation: "And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." It's Christmas day. It's HIS birthday today. Has He found a dwelling in your mind and in your heart? Is He present in our homes and in our midst? It's so easy to forget this profound gift and mystery of God's presence in our midst because we are so engrossed in the presents we want to give and receive. And it's so easy to forget His birthday wish because we are so focused on our Christmas wish.

* * *

Today, Jesus' birthday, why don't you ask Him what's His birthday wish for you: "Lord, do you want me to forgive some people? Do you want me to change a bad habit? Do you want me to terminate a sinful relationship? Do you want me to lessen my pride and selfishness?" Yeah, ask Him. Find some time to spend with Him in prayer. After all, it's His birthday today, right?

* * *

Perhaps, as a nation, we should pause and ask Him today what His wish for the Philippines is: "Lord do you want the present administration to go on? Do you want to change the present breed of politicians, government and military officials in our midst? Do you want our people to live in poverty and suffering? What is it that we, as a people, are doing wrong? What is it that you ask of each one of us?"

Hey, it's His birthday, remember? Not what we want. Not what our leaders want, but what He wants.

* * *

If we ask the birthday celebrant Himself, He will perhaps tell us that: keeping Christmas is fine, but sharing Christmas is better. Christmas decorations are fine, but Christmas action is better; Christmas caroling is fine, but Christmas caring is better; Christmas presents are OK, but Christmas presence is better. Christmas partying is OK, but Christmas parting with one's possessions for others is better.

If only we really listen to Him.

* * *

The greatest story ever told is about a God who loved the world so much that He sent His only Son to redeem it. The saddest story ever told is about a world that refused to accept Him then, and which refuses to accept Him even now. And so it is that whenever we tell and retell the Christmas story, we are reminded of who we are—children of God so loved by the Father. It has been 2,005 years since the first Christmas. Are you a part of the greatest story or the saddest story ever told?

* * *

Someone once said that we miss out on the Christmas nativity scene because we are engrossed in the activity scene. This dawned on me one evening when, hurrying from a previous Mass, I rushed into a hotel function room for a silver wedding anniversary Mass. As I was preparing for the Mass, I was surprised to realize that I knew nobody in the congregation. I soon realized that I was with the wrong gathering in the wrong function room. That was a reminder for me to slow down on the activity scene and to focus more on the nativity scene.

* * *

We have not only commercialized Christmas, we also have professionalized it. And so it is that we become super-busy in our professions (even in our priestly profession) this time of the year. Even professional beggars abound this time around. For some, it is all business and a frenzied time to make money. It's the time for buying and selling, partying and merrymaking. OK, fine, whatever, but please don't forget where Christmas really happens—in our hearts; and where Christmas really matters—in our loving and in our sharing what we have with those in want.

* * *

On a personal note, a Christmas moment happened last Dec. 20 in our family with the birth of KC Santos, the first great-granddaughter of our Mama Conching and daughter of our niece Ren and her husband JE. Welcome to this world KC! May you and your generation have a brighter tomorrow, a more peaceful world, a healthy environment and a better Philippines, and many meaningful Christmases to celebrate.

* * *

I wish you all a truly blessed Christmas! I wish you a heart that has reconciled and is at peace with God; a home that is filled with lots of caring and love that overflows to others in want; a country that is free from too much politics; and a world where God is truly dwelling among us.

* * *

Fr. Toter Resuello invites all alumni of the St. Francis Seminary in Lipa City for a homecoming on Dec. 30, 2005. The celebration of the Eucharist starts at 8:30 a.m. with Archbishop Ramon Arguelles and Bishop Reynaldo Evangelista. For inquiries, call 043-7564190 and 043-7562175.

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, Happy Birthday! Please remind me, tell us again, what will make you truly happy. Amen.

An old soldier and Christmas

REVEILLE

Ramon J. Farolan

ONE OF MY FAVORITE ACTION STARS AND AN academy award-winning director, Clint Eastwood, once said: "To me life is like the back nine in golf. Sometimes you play better on the back nine. You may not be stronger, but hopefully you are wiser. And if you keep most of your experiences intact, you can pass on a lot of wisdom to the coming generation."

* * *

There are only a few things in life that are certain: death and growing old. I was about to add taxes but unfortunately, in this country of ours, a lot of people could disagree with a wink and a smile. You cannot do anything about death but aging is a different reality. We can either whine about it, or we can appreciate the wisdom and perspective that often go hand in hand with growing old. As Ingrid Bergman put it: "Old age is like climbing a mountain. You climb from ledge to ledge. The higher you get, the more tired and breathless you become, but at the same time, your views also become more extensive." The late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir gave it a different twist: "Old age is like being a passenger in an airplane flying through turbulent weather. Once on board, there is nothing you can do."

Last week, retired General Fortunato Abat was arrested by cops in civilian clothes, after first being invited to Camp Crame for "tactical interrogation." The 80-year-old former army commander had just proclaimed himself head of a "revolutionary transition government" headquartered at Club Filipino in San Juan. Along with former Budget Secretary Salvador Enriquez and former Ambassador Roy Señeres, Abat was charged with inciting to sedition by Department of Justice prosecutors.

Over lunch at Mario's in Quezon City, I asked him why he thought he was finally arrested this time, considering that, in the past, he had been publicly expressing similar views in various meetings with other groups calling for the President's resignation. Abat opined that, perhaps, his actions had caused some embarrassment for the President who was then in Kuala Lumpur, attending an Asean Summit. Can you imagine if Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was attending a conference abroad and one of his generals proclaimed the establishment of a revolutionary transition government in Bangkok! It was upon President Macapagal-Arroyo's return to Manila that the DOJ and police officers moved against Abat.

In a full-page newspaper advertisement a few days after his arrest, Abat explained the reasons for his actions and subsequent detention. He had been arrested, "because I dared to heed the longing cry of 85 million Filipinos for a man who would lead them out of the tyranny of corruption and deceit and incompetence of the present administration."

But a great part of his passionate statement, titled "I fear not the night before dawn," was devoted to reprimanding the inaction of our young people. He said it was a shame that "given the ills and misrule that bedevil our beloved country, none of our young generation of leaders would step forward and take the lead to do something…where are our youthful leaders?" he asked.

This is a valid observation and, perhaps, part of the answer lies in the fact that there is a dearth of viable alternatives. The results of Edsa I and Edsa II have been frustrating for our people, young and old, and the thought of another rigodon involving the same tired faces and characters on the political stage does not lend to any kind of enthusiasm for change.

What many people may not be aware of is that General Abat has paid an exceedingly high personal price for his opposition to the present administration. His eldest son, Victor, a member of PMA Class 1977 is now on floating status, having been relieved from his last post as an Army deputy brigade commander. His son in law, PNP C/Supt. Jaime Caringal, PMA Class 1976, is currently head of a relatively minor unit in Camp Crame, having been yanked out of a regional command sometime last year.

His great personal loss was in 1979 when another son, Tito, PMA Class 1978, was killed in an encounter with NPA elements in Eastern Samar, barely a year after graduation. A training facility for Army reservists, located in Manaoag, Pangasinan, is named after the young Abat and is home to the 54th Engineering Brigade of the Philippine Army.

Last year, when he was en route to Manaoag to mark the 25th anniversary of his son's death, he was informed by AFP authorities that the activities for the day—military honor's upon arrival, wreath-laying, inspirational messages for the soldiers—had been cancelled on orders from higher headquarters. This was a particularly harsh blow for a father who had lost his son in the field of battle.

At a time when many retired officers have called it a day, or prefer to remain on the sidelines, or, perhaps, are wary of losing the perks they enjoy as officers of some government corporation, this old soldier continues the good fight for the things he believes in. Whether or not you agree with his views, one must recognize his patriotism, his willingness to make personal sacrifices for principles, and his continuing faith in the future of the nation and in the goodness of our people.

A Merry Christmas to all! *Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!*

A Christmas card

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

MALIGAYANG PASKO TO ALL MY READERS—TO those who read me to reinforce their own opinions, to be entertained, to be comforted, to be discomfited, to monitor the latest outrage from my warped mind, or to add yet another item in their arsenal of resentment. For whatever reason you read me—I thank you!

A friend once called me to say that an acquaintance of hers, upon finding out that we knew each other personally, told her: "I hope you don't mind but please tell Rina I pray for her each time I read her column."

"Do you mind if she prays for you?" my friend asked. "Well, every little bit helps," I said, "and prayers are always welcome, as long as she's not praying '*Kunin mo na siya*, Lord (Please take her now, Lord)."

No matter if you curse me or pray for me, or better yet, laugh out loud or nod your head in agreement, as long as you read me, please know the effort is appreciated. I'm alternately amused and irritated when interviewers, most of them students, ask me if I do "anything else besides write your columns." Often, I want to exclaim: "Writing a column five times a week isn't enough work?!" The actual physical effort of sitting down in front of my laptop and tapping out the required 5,700 characters takes no more than an hour or two, even quicker if I am especially inspired or incensed. But it's by looking for what goes into each column that I earn my monthly wage. To fill this space with words that not only make sense but actually convey information, analysis or insight—or at least entertain—I must read most of the newspapers daily, monitor TV and radio news, seek out sources, show up at press conferences and media events, and search for interesting people and places to write about. I must also read books, watch movies, go to stage plays and musicals and soak up TV shows—though the last is admittedly a guilty pleasure.

It would really suck if I found out that all this effort hardly has any impact on the INQUIRER's readers—or, to be more pretentious about it—the life of the nation. So thank you to all of you who read me, and even more special thanks to those who go out of their way to respond and react. Yes, even the poison pen letters and e-mail, the stampitas and plastic baby fetuses, the earnest corrections and disdainful counter-arguments—all these tell me my words have moved you, enough to take a few minutes of your time to set your own words on paper or on computer screen. I read everything you send my way. And while my blood pressure may sometimes react, be assured I never mutter: "*Kunin niyo na sila*, Lord."

* * *

HOW happy are you today? That may sound like an impudent and even stupid question, given that today is Dec. 25, Christmas Day, perhaps the most anticipated day in all of Christendom.

How many *tulogs na lang* did you, as a child, have to endure before this day finally came? I remember the "Advent Wreaths" we used to light in my Catholic girls' school, and our impatience as we waited for the fourth candle to be lit as it signaled that Christmas was nigh. While Christmas Eve dinner and the exchange of gifts were the real highlights of the year for my family, Christmas Day would find us tired but euphoric, and gorging on leftover ham and fruit salad.

According to the "2005 Fourth Quarter Survey of the Social Weather Stations," about 6 out of 10 (62 percent) adult Filipinos were expecting a "happy" Christmas this year, down from 64 percent last year, 77 percent in 2003 and 82 percent in 2002.

But if you live outside Metro Manila, chances are your Christmas would be even happier, with only 55 percent of Metro Manilans saying they expected to be happy today, compared to 58 percent in the rest of Luzon, 66 percent in the Visayas, and 68 percent in Mindanao. Now I know the "holiday blahs" I took note of in previous columns were not just a personal perception, but one shared by a big proportion of city dwellers.

Not even money, it seems, is a guarantee of holiday happiness. The same survey found a "steady decline among those anticipating a happy Christmas from upper classes ABC and the lower class E since 2002."

In the previous three years, the SWS noted that about three out of four (72-78 percent) of classes A, B and C expected a happy Christmas, but now only three out of five (62 percent) do so. Among the poorest, only three-fifths (61 percent) are looking forward to Christmas, "a decline from 68 percent in 2004, 75 percent in 2003, and 82 percent in 2002."

There is a slight increase in "holiday anticipation" among the Class D—62 percent, up from 59 percent last year, but still lower than the 78 percent in 2003 and 82 percent in 2002.

If even Christmas can't lift us out of our slump, I guess the national mood is in desperate need of some lifting, indeed!

* * *

BUT I started out this column on a note of gratitude.

Despite everything we've had to deal with this year, there are many things still to be grateful for. For me personally, it has to be relative good health, even if my doctors complain that I don't prioritize regular visits to them. But when I had to visit a doctor in Phnom Penh after a fall in my hotel bathroom, and nothing was found to be seriously wrong, I suddenly realized that I had been taking my health for granted for too long. To be a middle-aged, overweight diabetic and still be in fighting form with no debilitating illness—that is a gift one has to acknowledge at least!

I'm grateful, as well, for family and friends who continue to be steadfast sources of support and comfort. I'm especially grateful for new friends I have made in the last few months, and for friends I may not even know I have out there. To all of you, I'm sending out this Christmas card, thank you and blessings all around!

Kenosis: The message of Christmas

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

I GREW UP BELIEVING THAT CHRISTMAS IS A time of joy, merriment, and love—but never quite knowing why the birth of the infant Jesus in a barn should occasion such sentiments. I learned that this was not an ordinary child—that he is God's son sent into the world to save man, but I never quite understood why man needed to be saved in the first place. The meanings that this story held for me faded as I got older. The coming of Christmas became no more than a prelude to the New Year, a welcome break from daily routine just before the year finally comes to an end. Like a clever adult, I began to think of Christmas as nothing more than a time set aside for children.

The message of Christmas has however returned to me since encountering the Greek word "kenosis," which leapt like an early Christmas gift from Gianni Vattimo's book "Belief." The dictionary defines this word to mean the act of "emptying." In Christian theology, it refers to the voluntary act of abasement by which God the Son becomes man. Not being a theologian, I turned to my younger brother, Fr. Ambo David, who is a biblical scholar and knows Greek, to shed some light on the significance of this unique word. Specifically, I asked: what is God "emptying" by becoming man? And why would that be a momentous event for Christians?

Our discussions have deepened my appreciation for what my brother does as a hemeneuticist of the Scripture. I can only attempt to synthesize here what I take to be the product of a fusion of horizons—mine from postmodernism and sociology, his from hermeneutics and theology. By deciding to become man, God emptied himself of all divine powers so that He could properly become of this world, in a word—secular. By becoming man, his life became finite, and He proved this by dying on the cross. This suggests, Vattimo argues, that secularity is the true destination of Christianity.

This exploration, to my great astonishment, ironically led me back to the writings of that sharp anti-Christ—Friedrich Nietzsche. It was he who took up the famous formulation "God is dead" and wove a whole philosophy around it. He wrote: "After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow too." This oft-quoted line from the German philosopher is usually taken to be emblematic of his nihilistic philosophy, the sustained questioning of all that hitherto has been valued, and a declaration that man must strive to be the inventor of his own morality. Reading these lines, I have always been convinced that Nietzsche was merely using God as a metaphor for Universal Truth.

"Let us beware," Nietzsche writes, "of saying there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purposes that the word 'accident' has meaning….When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to 'naturalize' humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?"

Ahead of his time, Nietzsche sensed that the old certainties, including those of science, are either dead or dying. Nothing stands any longer as a stable measure of truth, justice, or beauty. Kenosis has thus come to mean secularization in all its open-endedness. God has finally let go of His own creation. He has given man the freedom to be alone in the world. But as a parting gift, He has sent his only begotten son to the world—not to serve as God on earth, but to be the exemplar of a human being; not as a master, but as a friend.

I love this message. It tells the story of a God of love rather than of a God of Truth or Power. It resonates well with the mood of our times—with what one writer has called "the dissolution of the markers of certainty," and with the openness to paradox and indeterminacy that living in today's world seems to require of us. The growth of this openness has, of course, been very uneven. Many people become disoriented by the erasure of the old symbols of authority. They seek easy closures by recourse to authority. In their everyday lives, they clamor for an all-knowing Big Brother to tell them how they should live their lives. In politics, they gravitate around strongmen who could provide willful leadership. They find ideological refuge in various forms of fundamentalism. They look for principles first rather than for practical solutions to changing problems.

When God emptied Himself of all powers over our world, we became free to define our mode of being, to choose our own meanings, and to establish the rules that will govern our relationships with one another and with the world. Nothing else should henceforth constrain us except the power of our imagination.

Yet the old metaphysical shadows continue to stalk us. Even as we are already shaping ourselves in limitless ways, our minds cannot seem to grasp the message of kenosis. As Nietzsche wrote: "This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds though done still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves."

A meaningful Christmas to one and all!

* * *

Comments to public.lives@gmail.com

A wish for Isabela

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE

Patricia Evangelista

IT'S CHRISTMAS. There's a Christmas stocking hanging outside my bedroom door and a giggling baby just outside my room, and Jose Mari Chan's "Christmas in Our Hearts" is playing away.

It's been 20 years since there's been a baby in the house—although from the way he treats me, my brother still thinks I'm 2 years old. Before, on the rare occasions when my mother would get hold of someone else's baby, the little bundle would be smothered with kisses and assaulted with unintelligible baby talk. As my mother still behaves like that whenever she catches hold of me, I'm happy to say there's now a creature in pink romper who doesn't mind taking my place.

My sister gave birth a few months ago, and fell in love with the name Isabela. She wanted people to call the baby Ishy (something I still for the life of me do not understand). To ensure the baby's "Ishiness," my sister decided to officially name the baby Ishabella. All of us in the family put our respective feet down, and Isabela stayed Isabela. May she forever be grateful.

Everyone in the house is currently baby-crazy, although Isa reserves most of her charm for the males. Everyone's been drafted into babysitting duty, except me. I have been told I shouldn't be trusted to keep track of something in remote control, much less another human being. I found it mortally offensive that Isabela seemed to agree.

I was singing to her the alphabet song the other day—and Dad said it was the only surefire way to get her to laugh. By the time I hit "F, you're the feather in my arms," she was screaming—with pain, I was told. Mom took her away in a hurry.

Tonight, Isabela will meet her doting Lolo again. My grandfather is one of the last few gentlemen surviving. It took me a long time to figure out his gentlemanliness, which extended even to expressions of affections. When I tell him "I love you," he says thank you. Over the telephone, during dinner, the routine never changes. "I love you, Lolo," nets me a smile and a "thank you," not "I love you, too." Much as I do love him, it's my sincerest wish that the men in this world will not be as polite to me in the future.

I guess having a baby in the house makes you more aware—or afraid—of the future. I mean, sure, I'm as afraid as the next person. I'm scared of not graduating, and of tripping down the front steps of the University of the Philippines' Palma hall. I'm scared of furry caterpillars, and of that lady in black living in my closet deciding one day to make an appearance. I'm scared of big parties and of being 20 and of never fitting into my jeans. Most of all, I'm afraid of waking up 50 years old one day and realizing I've done nothing, nothing at all.

No one will deny that the country is a mess, and that a lot of things have to be done. Neither will anyone deny that my generation is going to have to do a lot of cleaning up in the next few years. Seeing Isabela kicking up a storm makes that task more real: It's one thing to change the world for me; it's completely another thing to have to change the world for her.

Recently, I went to a cocktail party held in celebration of British-Filipino Friendship Day. I was surprised to find out how many Brits have decided to make their home here. One of them said he was here 12 years ago, and spent the next 12 years attempting to be transferred back to the Philippines. Another one said that he's been moving from country to country, but the one thing that was so different with Filipinos was their sincerity—so he decided to stay here.

"In other countries," he said, "they'll welcome you with a smile, but you won't know if that smile is real. Here, you just do."

One of the gentlemen, Simon Bewley, of the British School of Manila, told a story "you should tell people about." He had gone to Jollibee for lunch and was picked up by his driver right after. Halfway to Makati, he realized he'd left his diary, containing precious notes, P20,000 in cash and his cellular phone. He tried calling the phone, but "the subscriber cannot be reached." He wrote everything off as a loss, but still decided to go back for one last try. Three hours had elapsed by the time he stepped out of the car.

The security guard saw him immediately. According to Mr. Bewley, the guard's face "broke out into one of the most beautiful smiles I've seen." The guard told Mr. Bewley not to worry, then escorted him to the manager. The diary, along with cell phone, cash and notes, was safe in the restaurant's vault—a place where no subscriber could be reached. It was the security guard who had found and turned over everything to the management.

Mr. Bewley tried to give the guard a monetary reward, but the guard smilingly refused. Just ask Mr. Bewley. He says he's willing to answer questions.

It's hard to be that afraid for a country that still has people like this. They make you want to tell every cynical Tom, Dick or Harry, "I told you so." The other day I took a cab from UP to ABS-CBN. The taxi driver pointed at the taxi meter and asked me how much I usually paid for the distance, and I shrieked like a banshee. "*Hindi po ganyan kataas!*" The meter had already ticked off to P90 after one-third of a trip that usually cost P70. I told him sharply his meter was faulty.

He explained that he had just noticed that the meter was going faster than usual, and said he was willing to be paid whatever I thought was fair. Embarrassed, I apologized, and thanked him for bringing the meter to my attention. He smiled it off. "*Tama lang naman*, ma'am," he said. We chatted a bit; about his kids and how glad he was for the Christmas season rush that meant he never had an empty cab. By the time he deposited me at work, we were on first-name basis. Kuya Francis (NYU 985) Merry Christmas *po, at salamat*.

It's Christmas morning, the day celebrating the birth of the Christ-child. All over the country, kids are waking up to pull parents to Christmas trees, have chocolate for breakfast, or simply to be together with them. Everywhere, too, there are children who can't even afford to celebrate, whose parents are out looking for a living, whether in a garbage dump in Payatas or somewhere in Japan, Italy or Saudi.

Isabela is on my dad's lap, being taught the difference between her toes and fingers (and which she's allowed to chew). Next Christmas, I'd like to wake up knowing Isabela is going to be living in a better country—probably, this is also the wish of every mother, father, sister, brother or taxi driver who has seen a baby smile.

* * *

Send comments to pat.evangelista@gmail.com

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Editor **Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.**

Yuletide reflections

CHRISTIANS COMMEMORATE TODAY THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. FOR many, it is a time for hope. It's a time for wishing something better would come one's way. What one wishes for usually depends on his or her station in life. For the unemployed, it's finding work or the means to support themselves. For executives, it could be driving a news sports car. But there are wishes common to people of different social classes—peace and happiness.

This Yuletide season is also a time for gift-giving. It's no longer gold, frankincense and myrrh that the Three Magi from the East presented to an infant more than 2,000 years ago. Increasingly, the presents that people give to loved ones, godchildren and friends come from *tiangge* because these are cheaper than those that can be found in malls.

This season is also a time for reflection. Pope Benedict XVI speaks of the light during the feast of Christmas—Jesus Christ—who can "illuminate those who lie in darkness."

"(O)n seeing the streets and squares of our cities adorned with glittering lights, let us remember that these lights evoke another light, invisible to our eyes, but not to our hearts. Contemplating them, when lighting the candles of churches or the Nativity and Christmas tree lights in our homes, may our spirits open to the true spiritual light brought to all men and women of good will. The God with us, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary is the Star of our lives!" says the Pope.

'May our spirits open to true spiritual light'

By Pope Benedict XVI

TODAY'S AUDIENCE TAKES PLACE IN AN atmosphere of joy and longing expectation of the Christmas festivity. The Lord Jesus is coming! We repeat these days in prayer, preparing our hearts to experience the joy of the Redeemer's birth. In particular, in this last week of Advent, the liturgy accompanies and supports our interior journey with repeated invitations to receive the Savior, recognizing him in the humble Child lying in a manger.

This is the mystery of Christmas, which we can understand better through so many symbols. Among these symbols is that of light, which is one of the richest in spiritual meaning and on which I would like to reflect briefly.

The feast of Christmas coincides, in our hemisphere, with the time of the year in which the sun ends its descending parabola and begins the phase in which the time of daylight increases gradually, according to the successive course of the seasons. This helps us to understand better the subject of light that prevails over darkness. It is a symbol that evokes a reality that affects man's inner being: I am referring to the light of good that overcomes evil, of love that overcomes hatred, of life that conquers death.

Love

Christmas makes us think of this interior light, of the divine light that presents to us again the proclamation of the definitive victory of the love of God over sin and death. For this reason, in the novena of holy Christmas that we are now living, there are many and significant references to light.

We were also reminded of it by the antiphon sung at the beginning of our meeting. The Savior awaited by the nations is greeted as the Rising Sun, the star that indicates the way and the guide of people, wayfarers amid the darkness and dangers of the world toward the salvation promised by God and realized in Jesus Christ.

In preparing to celebrate the birth of the Savior with joy in our families and ecclesial communities—while a certain modern and consumer culture tries to make the Christian symbols of the celebration of Christmas disappear—let us assume the commitment to understand the value of the Christmas traditions, which are part of the patrimony of our faith and our culture, in order to transmit them to the new generations.

Rising sun

In particular, on seeing the streets and squares of our cities adorned with glittering lights, let us remember that these lights evoke another light, invisible to our eyes, but not to our hearts. Contemplating them, when lighting the candles of churches or the Nativity and Christmas tree lights in our homes, may our spirits open to the true spiritual light brought to all men and women of good will. The God with us, born in Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary is the Star of our lives!

"Rising Sun, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, illuminate those who lie in darkness and in the shadows of death." On assuming this invocation of today's liturgy, let us pray to the Lord to hasten his glorious coming among us, among all those who are suffering, as only in him can they find the answer to the authentic expectations of the human heart.

May this Star of light that never sets, communicate to us the strength to follow always the path of truth, justice and love! Let us live intensely these days that precede Christmas together with Mary, the Virgin of silence and listening. May she, who was totally enveloped by the light of the Holy Spirit, help us to understand and to live fully the mystery of Christ's Christmas.

With these sentiments, exhorting you to keep alive the interior wonder in the fervent expectation of the now close celebration of the birth of the Lord, with joy I wish all of you here present, your families, your communities, and your loved ones a holy and happy Christmas.

Merry Christmas to all!

(Address the Pope gave at the general audience in Vatican on Dec. 21. Translation by Zenit.org.)

ILLUSTRATION AND PAGE DESIGN BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

A Christmas whodunnit: Who killed the little match girl?

By Raul V. Fabella

A SIMPLE STORY OF HAUNTING sadness, Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl" unfolds in winter snow, at once soft and unforgiving, on New Year's Eve. A girl in tattered clothes totters in the narrow town street, shivering and hungry. She is hawking matches. She hasn't sold any today. She keeps a brave face, determined not to inspire pity. The townspeople hardly notice and do not stop to buy. A close brush with a speeding carriage sends her sprawling, separating her from her flimsy pair of shoes.

In the bitter cold by the door of a warm and happy home, she starts to hallucinate. She sees visions of steaming food, of glowing warmth, and of the only being from whom she had known love—her grandma. Frantically, she battles the engulfing doom, lighting matchsticks one after another. She runs out of matchsticks. On New Year's Day, she is found dead. Who killed the little match girl?

'In the bitter cold by the door of a warm and happy home, she starts to hallucinate. She sees visions of steaming food, of glowing warmth, and of the only being from whom she had known love—her grandma'

Busy

Was it the townspeople? The townspeople knew winter was coming and had stocked up on matches, among others. They got busy like ants, not stopping to indulge the warmth of summer or the allure of fall. They harvested and stored the grain, bundled the hay, split the logs, kept the oil in pitchers, and, yes, while they were cheap, bought matches.

Year in and year out, they have submitted to the endless cycle of sowing and reaping without demur. Backbreaking work, ah, that was as unpleasant for them as for you and me, but winter survival has a stiff price and they have conceded the futility of haggling. "You don't haggle with Mistress Winter," they were told as children, and so they tell theirs. If you can't feed the furnace in your belly when white blankets the land, she closes your eyes forever.

Docile

Was it Mistress Winter, then? She who has closed many a pair of eyes through the generations. Eyes whose hands refused to get busy; eyes whose heads got too big for the company of the "docile herd." Those eyes saw themselves as the grand exceptions to the chain of toil and rest. They were going to pull the wool over Mistress Winter's eyes.

Oh, sometimes they succeeded. They would hang their larders on some officious bleeding hearts' pantry. When the harvest is bountiful, hunger is kept at bay and Mistress Winter keeps a respectful distance. With the harvest lean, however, Mistress Winter comes knocking and so many petulant eyes fail to see the exuberant break of spring. But petulance is not among this little girl's afflictions.

Was it "The Origin of Species?" Across generations and through many lean harvests, hangers-on slink away without descendants into unmarked graves, their kind celebrated more in "beware" parables than in the clangor of children.

Survival of the fittest dictates that there will be fewer guitar-strumming grasshoppers next summer in Aesop's green meadows to taunt the swarm of busy ants. By Darwin's reckoning, the little match girl should never have been born. And her tragic end was preordained to reaffirm the survival of the fittest.

And so are the townspeople on this bitterly cold New Year's Eve. They descended from a hardy stock that has always paid its dues in backbreaking toil. Wrapped in yearend finery, one cannot imagine bodies stooped to the ground battling weeds or noses rubbed against the grindstone. They are a proud lot. The only fellowship they know with other men stands on imperious self-carriage, one that takes offense at gestures of pity, asked or offered.

Foresight

Foresight is hardwired in them. Meat in the pantry, a warm domicile and yes, also matches.

Could it have been Master Foresight?

The little match girl was too proud to make helplessness her ally. She was a part of this town, too, with genes unbent by the allure of surrender. She could never lift a finger to knock on that door. But she had a drunk and a drifter for a father who was dependent on her.

"She dared not go home for she had no money to show and she knew her father would surely beat her."

Tonight, her pantry was bare. Yet she could never bring herself to beg. Only an early death, it seems, can resolve a genetic dissonance.

Alms

The townspeople are not stonehearted. But to a man, they assume that to every child's hunger pangs rise a proud responsible father who would be surely insulted by a hint of alms. It was beyond them to imagine that buying a box of matches was paying for a life. They may even have thought it was a Christmas game. They don't meet forlorn guitar-lugging grasshoppers every day. Ice and sleet will usually have long separated the poor creatures from their myopic indulgence. The improbable when it happens is invisible.

They aren't unaware that even among upright families can arise a "black sheep" who would challenge the pact. Nobody knows why. It just happens, like the harshness of winter. This is why Mistress Winter is never asleep on her watch. The wastrels who beat their children for sustenance are continuously, if unpredictably, spinning out of the bellies of even clean genealogies. Their pantries will invariably run empty and the eyes of some drifter and drunk will need to be shut this winter.

Tomorrow, or the day after, Mistress Winter will come at the appointed hour to close the eyes of a drunkard and a drifter of a father. To do so, she must tonight, sadly, if mercifully, snap out the wretched life of the little girl. And Hans Christian Andersen, himself an offspring of the snow queen, can only offer the ultimate, comfortless catharsis. It is either the little match girl's life or the townsfolk's very life force. A bad bargain but one that must be concluded without delay or compromise.

"Bloody murder!" one heart screams. But by whom? By what?

(Fabella is the dean of the School of Economics, University of the Philippines.)

Let streetchildren find shelter in churches

By Poch Suzara

FOR THIS CHRISTMAS, I WANT THE millions of children living outside in the streets of our major cities seeking to survive under the most inhuman of conditions to live inside churches, cathedrals, synagogues, temples, and chapels. If we have no heart to love our neighbors, then let the Lord and his angels love them instead. In the meantime, I want those streets swept and properly maintained and no longer used as garbage dumps to serve as emblems of the kind of love we have for our country.

Teachers and professors: For this Christmas, I want school teachers and college professors to bring students in touch with the finest achievements of the human mind. To teach them how to think, and not what to believe. To make them appreciate that there is not only beauty, but also power in the mind that thinks. That there is more to freedom of rationality than just the freedom to enjoy stupidity. That the individual is not the end and the aim of his own being: outside the individual is his family, his country, and indeed, the future of humanity.

For better highways: For this Christmas, I want the Philippines to compete with other nations not in raising pigs, chickens and cows but in raising children to become mature adults and citizens of their country. And then I want the Philippines to compete not with Korea in science and technology, but with Vietnam, developing as a nation not with childish prayer rallies and silly theology.

More meaningful role for Congress: For this Christmas, I want Congress to make more substantial changes for the Philippines rather than just changing the rules on how to quarrel with each other like children. The entire nation has a lot of catching up to do, not only with the higher standards of living, but also with the higher standards of thinking in other countries. Congress must realize that we are all born ignorant, not stupid. We are made stupid by the system of education in the Philippines. Indeed, the majority of Filipinos continue to have faith in stupid answers to obsolete questions that we, the people, have not even asked.

For responsible reporting: For this Christmas, I want editors and writers to publish facts and information, and not lies and misinformation. If we must write about killings worthy of the front pages of our papers and magazines, we should not ignore the worst kind of killing that is happening every day in the Philippines: the killing of the curious minds of our children in schools.

For Church leaders: For this Christmas, I want the Cardinal, the ministers, and the evangelists to admit that they know nothing about God; that they know nothing about heaven and hell or the future of mankind; that they know nothing about the virtues of adding to human welfare and happiness. They only know about the order and harmony in the universe, but they know nothing about the disorder and disharmony created on this earth by so many kinds of stupid religions. Why is it that everybody wants to go to heaven, and yet, nobody wants to die?

For the armed forces: For this Christmas, I want the Philippine Navy to fish for the civilians; I want the Philippine Army to plant rice for the civilians. I want the Philippine Air Force to fly not the wealthy politicians but the poor.

Church roles: For this Christmas, I want the church to encourage the multitude to practice birth control and family planning. To preach the morality of contraception, and not the morality of impregnation. What the Philippines desperately needs is not quantity but quality of human life. Perhaps, under population control, like most other Asian nations, we too can celebrate once a year the birth of social justice and the growth of decency throughout the land. It is silly to bless the poor, specially those poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of misery and poverty.

For this Christmas, I want those burdened with guilt of the original sin to realize that they are wasting their time. The original sin is neither original nor a sin. Not even if it were committed by Adam and Eve, who originated nothing in the first place. How can any of us be guilty of anything original if there were, supposedly first and foremost, an original creator?

For this Christmas, I want the born-again Christians to realize completely that wisdom is functional, not biblical. Each person, when he or she is born is an atheist. No baby has any religion. Of course, as soon as infants are born, adults begin to indoctrinate them. No baby is born a Muslim, Jew, Baptist, Catholic or Hindu. When they attain the age of intellectual maturity and repudiate that indoctrination, they become in the real sense of the word "born-again atheists." They go back to the purity of their beginning, before any of these theistic beliefs are put into their malleable minds.

Searching the Scriptures: For this Christmas, I want bible readers to admit one "historical fact" for 2,000 years (500 years in the Philippines), that truth is defined not by reason or logic, but by searching the Scriptures. Meanwhile, the revealed truth has yet to be revealed. Indeed, if all the answers to human problems were written in the holy bible, then by this time, surely, it should have already straightened out the religious mess in the Philippines that's keeping the Filipino poor and the country backward. The bible is silent on the problems of government and the ways to develop the human mind and cultivate the heart. Indeed, love and compassion are mostly derived from our sense of humanity; never from divinity or from deviltry.

For a free Philippines: For this Christmas, I want the Philippines to be free—free from stupid politics, free from fear and ignorance, free from superstition, and free from poverty. I want every Filipino to live and enjoy the good life—one inspired by love and guided by knowledge. I want the Filipino to have faith; faith in himself, faith in his country, and faith in this life in this world. Our world.

This will do for this Christmas. For next Christmas, I want more, much more for my Merry Christmas!

(Suzara is a former administrator of Legaspi Towers 300 on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.)

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Court battle looms over mining project

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—THE PROPOSED gold-copper mining project in an upland village in Kasibu town could end up in a fierce court battle, as those opposing the project have vowed to question its approval despite its supposed lack of social acceptability.

Jerrysal Mangaoang, director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Cagayan Valley, said Kasibu officials have threatened to seek court action in their fight against the Didipio mining project there.

"We'll just see each other in court," Mangaoang quoted Kasibu Mayor Romeo Tayaban as saying, after the mayor was informed that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has allowed the Didipio project to start operation in January 2006.

The proposed mining project, located in Barangay Didipio in Kasibu, is a $102-million venture by the Australasia Mining Philippines Inc. (AMPI), formerly known as Climax Arimco Mining Corp., an Australian firm.

Proponents said the project is expected to yield an estimated four million ounces of gold and 1.5 billion ounces of copper deposits underneath Dinkidi hill in Sitio Bacbacan, about 70 km from here.

Tayaban's reaction, Mangaoang said, was prompted by reports that Environment Secretary Michael Defensor has signed a directive allowing AMPI to start the project next year after ruling that the company has complied with the requirements.

Quoting Deinrado Simon Dimalibot, DENR undersecretary for mines, Mangaoang said the DENR has ruled that the project's recent endorsement by the Nueva Vizcaya provincial board was enough to satisfy the required proof of its social acceptability.

The board endorsed the project despite its rejection by the village council of Didipio and the town council of Kasibu.

Anti-mining groups here led by Tayaban and Kasibu officials earlier asked Defensor to revoke the project's environmental compliance certificate, after it failed to meet the condition of a prior approval by the Kasibu town council. *Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Rains damage Surigao farms, Visayas roads

BUTUAN CITY—INCESSANT RAINS continue to batter Surigao City for three days now, resulting to massive evacuation in riverside barangays.

Reports from the City Disaster Coordinating Council (CDCC) in Surigao City have pegged the number of affected families to over a hundred or 685 residents from Barangays San Juan, Washington, Capalayan and Sabang.

The residents were evacuated to the Surigao City Gymnasium.

At least 68 hectares of farmlands, mostly rice and fruit-bearing crops, were also damaged.

As of press time, the CDCC was conducting search and rescue and relief operations to the affected barangays.

In Tacloban City, infrastructure and fisheries and agriculture products worth at least P31.2 million have been damaged in Eastern Visayas due to incessant rains that hit the region over the last two weeks, the regional Office of Civil Defense reported.

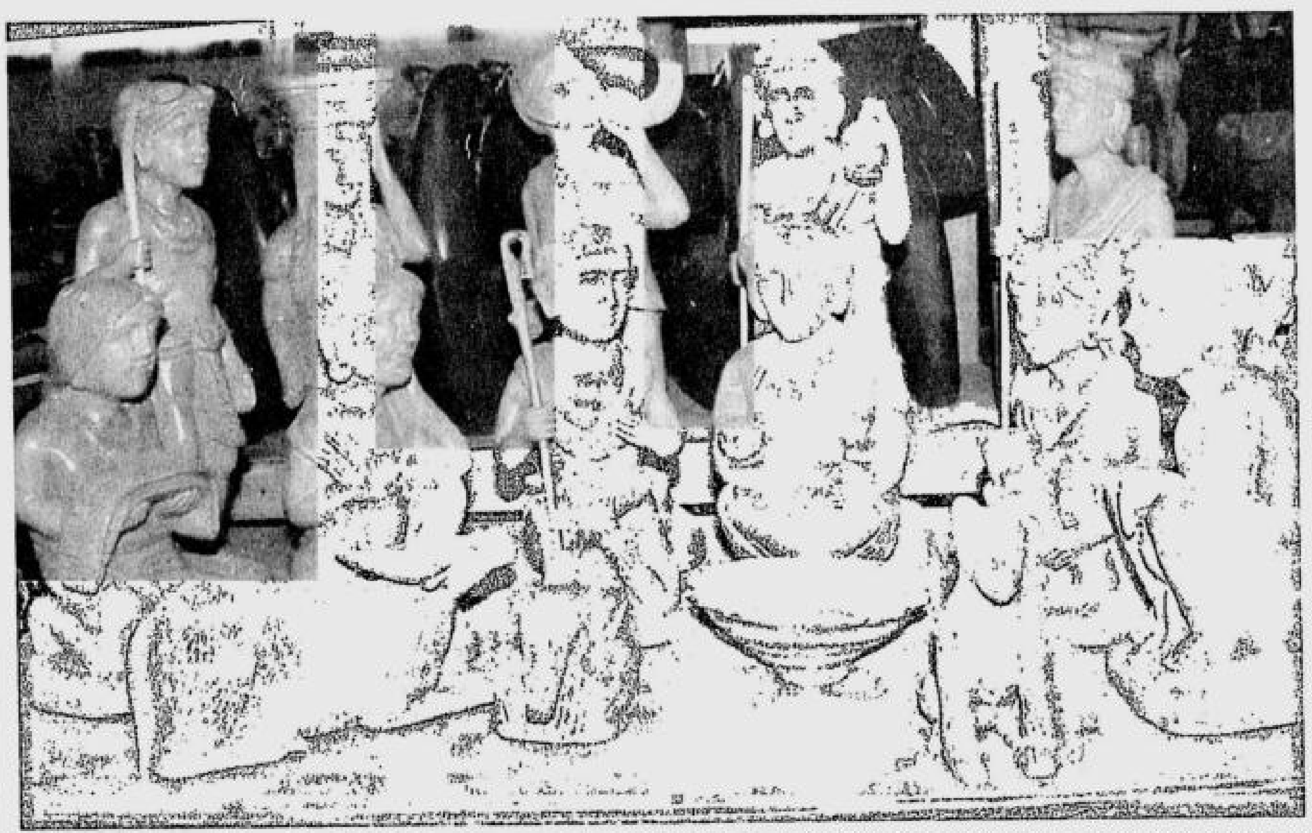
Adriano Fuego, OCD-8 chief, said several roads in 21 municipalities and in this city were heavily damaged or have slipped due to the floods. Damage to infrastructure in these areas was placed at P22.70 million, he said.

At least 12 towns in Leyte reported damage to their rice and other crops amounting to P8.19 million. These towns were Palo, Tanauan, Burauen, Pastrana, Dagami, Sta.Fe, San Miguel, Barugo, Carigara, Abuyog, MacArthur and Dulag.

Tanauan suffered damage to its fisheries amounting to P317,500 with several fish pens and fish pen facilities destroyed by the flood.

Tanauan Mayor Roque Tiu on Wednesday placed the entire town under a state of calamity, as only three of its 54 barangays did not suffer any damage due to flooding.

The rain, experienced by Eastern Visayas for more than two weeks now, has also affected 3,385 families or more than 20,300 persons living in low-lying areas in Palo, Tanauan, Tolosa and Dagami. *Ma. Kristina E. Cassion, PDI Mindanao Bureau and Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*



THE IGOROT rendition of the Nativity by Ifugao woodcarvers at Asin Road, Baguio City TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

G-string Nativity scene in Benguet town

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

TUBA, BENGUET—MOTORISTS REFLECTING on the true meaning of Christmas should drive down Asin Road here.

An Ifugao woodcarving shop displays foot-high pine wood replicas of Jesus, Joseph and the Three Kings, all wearing g-strings, and Mary wearing a native skirt called *tapis*.

Ifugaos have been pre-Christian icons for constructing the centuries-old rice terraces, but the Ifugao rendition of the Nativity Scene at Km 5 on Asin Road proves to all and sundry that Christmas is timeless and universal.

The shop is owned by Jacinta Gano, who has been exporting this Cordillera Nativity scene for years now.

Gano said she has explored all the artistic possibilities in coming up with her own interpretation of Nativity commonly known as *belen* in Filipino households.

For 15 years, she had been producing the traditional Christmas Nativity but it was only five years ago when she started to conceptualize and execute the Ifugao Nativity. She said she thought of making an Ifugao rendition to add local color to her creations.

The biblical characters were assembled in a way that onlookers immediately recognized that it was indeed the scene in the manger when Jesus was born.

Gano, however, added a little twist. "My three kings are not even the three Kings (like Melchor, Gaspar and Balthazar), they are the Ifugao elders whose gifts are not gold, myrrh and frankincense but animals such as chicken and pigs and woven native blankets," she said.

"In the Ifugao culture, community members bring these presents to a family to welcome a newly born child. We also hold a *cañao* (feast) to celebrate the [birth] of the child and this [assemblage] suggests that kind of celebration in my version of Nativity," she added.

Standing at 12 inches, the Ifugao biblical figures cost P8,000 a set. The traditional western Christmas nativity costs from P300 to P10,000 a set, depending on the size and the intricacy of the design.

Gano said the figures are not sold individually. "If one wants to own it, the whole set has to be bought," she said.

The Ifugao nativity is a hit among Ifugaos and visitors alike who drive to this town near Baguio City to get a set of their own.

These works of art are exported to other Asian countries like Japan, South Korea and Singapore, the United States, Canada and European countries such as Norway, Sweden, France, Italy and United Kingdom.

Aside from the nativity sets, other Christmas decorations such as carved figures of Santa Claus and angel replicas are also displayed and sold in Gano's shop.

"Buyers and distributors usually come to my shop just to fill their container vans, so I guess, there's really a strong market for Christmas decorations," she said.

She added: "The nativity sets are my specialty. They are not only sold during the Christmas season, they are available all year round. We even start producing them in January."

Nursing board topnotcher says she's staying home

By Dennis Jay C. Santos
PDI Mindanao Bureau

DAVAO CITY—WHILE MANY HEALTH WORKERS wanted to leave the country as soon as they can, the topnotcher of this year's nursing board examinations said she would be staying.

Yvette Pauline Paragua, 21, said she wanted to work in the country first, especially Davao, because "helping the community first is far more important than the economic rewards."

PARAGUA

A graduate of the Ateneo de Davao University, Yvette said her family is not well-off.

"My father works at a farm owned by my grandmother. My mother is a tutor. We are not rich but we are alright. My parents provide for our basic needs, but luxuries are very rare," said this eldest daughter of Leopoldo and Arlene Paragua. She has two sisters.

Yvette finished college under the scholarship program of USA-Davaoeños Inc., a group of Filipino nurses and executives in the United States, who want to help poor but promising nursing students in the city.

Her college dean Dr. Patria Manalaysay said Yvette is one of the two deserving students given a scholarship by the USA-Davaoeños. She described Yvette as a "silent worker."

"Until now I myself can't believe that I topped the exams," Yvette said, who got a score of 85.2 percent.

She tied with Bernard Ian Sotelo of the Cotabato Medical Foundation College in Midsayap, North Cotabato.

Melba Irene Gabuya, one of the pioneers in the formation and drafting of the curriculum for the nursing college in Ateneo de Davao said there are few nurses like Yvette, who prefer to serve in the country.

Gabuya said many students, including second coursers such as doctors, take up nursing because of the opportunity to work abroad.

ROUNDUP

Mats for Albay inmates

MAHIMBING NA PASKO SA INYO!
P

LIGAO CITY—Inmates from different jails in Albay province received native mats as Christmas present from the Albay-based Philippine Women Judges Association. Judge Aurora Biamira Parcia along with six judges said they initiated the Banig Operation Project so the inmates could have decent beddings.
Michael B. Jaucian, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Mindoro's civic worker dies

CITY OF CALAPAN—When floodwaters rose after the collapse of dikes last week, civic worker Bernadette "Bebet" Quitain, 38, was rushed onboard a small rubber boat to a hospital here. Bebet succumbed to cancer of the colon after many years of battling with the disease. For almost a decade, Bebet led relief operations during periods of calamity. Ironically, the teacher of the Divine Word of College of Calapan who led the the nongovernment group "Mal" for her civic activities died during a time of calamity. Her mother said Bebet's remains had to be transferred twice after waters submerged their house and the funeral parlor.
Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Landslide kills farmer

DIPOLOG CITY—A farmer died while a policeman remained missing after heavy rains triggered mudslides and flash floods here on Friday, authorities said. Two houses were also washed away by the floods towards the swelling Dipolog River. Reports reaching the Rescue 117 office here showed that the unidentified farmer died when mud buried his house in Barangay Diwan. Punta village chief Franklin Drilon identified the missing policeman as SPO4 Orland Villavito of the Dipolog city police. Drilon said Villavito was trying to rescue members of the Moboc family in Punta but was overpowered by the strong current. *Dennis Bagulo, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Ex-radioman slain in Laguna

CALAMBA CITY—A former Laguna broadcaster was found dead near a ricefield in Barangay Makasipac, Sta. Maria, Laguna on Thursday, police said. Luciano Razon, 48, who used to work as a commentator for the local radio 107.9 FM-Radyo Natin in Paete town, died from two bullet wounds in his head and another two in his body. Laguna police director Senior Supt. Federico Terte said Razon's wife told police that the victim had been inactive from his work as a radio commentator for almost two years now. "So we believe his death has nothing to do [with his work as a former broadcaster]," Terte said.
Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Triplets are guard's best gifts on Christmas

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—THIS SECURITY guard considers his newly born triplets as the best gifts he and his wife have received this Christmas.

But Edgreg Basadre, 28, of Pinamungahan town, admits that he should work harder now that he has five young children to support.

His wife Vilma, 28, was seven months pregnant when she delivered the triplets—two girls and a boy—at 11:31 a.m. on Tuesday at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center.

Based on hospital records, the three weighed close to 2 kilograms each—boy, 1.4 kg; and two girls, 1.6 kg and 1.4 kg.

Edgreg said they planned to name his children after the Blessed Virgin and Jesus Christ because they were born five days before Christmas.

The boy will be named Christopher while his two daughters will be Maria Cristina and Maria Teresa.

The infants were placed inside an incubator because they were born two-months premature.

Edgreg said that at first, they did not have any inkling that she would be having triplets until his wife decided to have her "baby" checked through an ultrasound.

"*Nahadlok naman gud ang akong asawa kay dako na kaayo ang iyang tiyan, unya murag may bitin kono nga molihok sa iyang tiyan* (She got scared because her tummy was so big and it felt as if there was a snake moving inside)," Edgreg said.

They were shocked when the doctor told them that the ultrasound showed she would be having triplets.

Still, Edgreg said he was very happy and considered the three as their "greatest" Christmas gifts.

The couple has two other children aged 3 and 18 months, which means they have to work harder to support their five children.

But Edgreg was apprehensive that his security agency would not understand his situation because he had not been reporting for work since his wife gave birth on Tuesday.

He added they had to spend P4,000 daily for the triplets' medicines.

Edgreg went to the Municipal Social Welfare and Development, which referred him to the Provincial Social Welfare Office headed by Marivic Garces.

Upon the instruction of Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia, Garces released initially P2,500 in financial assistance to Edgreg.

Garces, Garcia and her brother, Capitol consultant Pablo John Garcia visited the triplets at the VSMMC nursery.

The governor brought canned goods, noodles, biscuits and clothes. She also asked the hospital officials to give the triplets all the necessary medicines and then bill the provincial government afterwards.

But Edgreg complained yesterday afternoon that the nurses asked him again to buy medicines for the children.

He said he would talk to hospital officials because the governor had assured him that the provincial government would shoulder the medical expenses.

Pablo John, for his part, said he and his sister agreed to make the couple become members of PhilHealth.

2 more miners found in collapsed Cebu tunnel

CEBU CITY—THE BODIES OF the two remaining miners trapped in a collapsed tunnel were retrieved on Christmas Eve, 14 days after the coal mine exploded in a mountain village of Dalaguete, about 81 km south of here.

The rescue team found the bodies of Gregorio Amad, 35, and Manuel Lanogan, 45, past 8 a.m. yesterday at the extension of Raise 10, said Dalaguete Mayor Ronald Cesante.

Cesante said the team had difficulty getting the two miners because big boulders prevented them from going to extension of Raise 10.

The families agreed to bury the bodies yesterday afternoon because these were already in an advanced state of decomposition, he added.

Cesante said he felt relieved that the remaining bodies had been recovered.

"I know, the Christmas for the relatives of the fatalities could still be gloomy, but at least, they would not celebrate Christmas at the tunnel site," Cesante said.

The families of Amad and Lanogan had been staying at the mine site of Ibalong Resources Development Corp. (IRDC) in Barangay Dumalan since Dec. 10 when the mine tunnel collapsed due to methane gas explosion.

The Department of Energy has been conducting an investigation to determine if the Taiwanese-owned firm failed to follow safety guidelines that triggered the explosion, which claimed the lives of eight miners.

Cesante said the mine would remain closed until the DOE released its findings.

The mayor also gave the assurance that the Dalaguete municipal government would evaluate the DOE investigation report and might refer it to other experts, to ensure that a similar incident would not happen in the future. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

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INQUIRER Mindanao

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Nico A. Alconaba

Christmastime in the city for Davao 'lumad'

> 'The best Christmas we can receive from the people from the city and the gov't is respect for our rights to our lands and peace'

By Rolando B. Pinsoy
Davao City

REY MONTERO, 25, A Manobo from Paquibato District in Davao City, always looks forward to December when they go to Davao City, sing carols and receive clothes and other gifts to bring back home to his family.

Although he got fewer gifts this year, he said he would still return to the city next December.

"We do this every year—to ask for Christmas gifts from the city," said Carlito Bukayla, 45, a Matigsalog from the village of Tapak in Paquibato.

He said he has done so since he was only 19 years old in 1986. This time, he brought along four of his children to help in the caroling and asking for food.

City host

Indigenous peoples from the hinterlands of Davao City, Bukidnon and Agusan del Norte have come to the city to ask for Christmas gifts from residents as early as the first week of November. They can be seen going around the streets and marketplaces, knocking on doors and private offices to sing Christmas carols, and asking for money and used clothing.

In the past, they had to brave the city's harsh and cold weather wherever they could find shelter.

ATA-MANOBO carolers from the hinterland villages of Davao stay at a gymnasium in Barangay Bankerohan in Davao City as part of services provided by the city government for them during the holidays.

But in the last few years, the city has played host to more 1,000 *lumad* families. Through the initiative of Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, they were allowed to stay in the gymnasium of Barangay Bankerohan for their safety and comfort.

Barangay workers look after the needs of the "visitors," while volunteer doctors from the city government are always on call for medical assistance. They will also be receiving cash gifts from the city government.

Interactive

"They are welcome here. Anyway, they are only here one month in a year and we are happy to help them because we know they have almost nothing to eat back in their homes in the mountains," said Bankerohan village chair Edgar Ibuyan.

Angeles Paler, who lives near the gymnasium, does not mind the minor disturbances. She spends her day interacting with the *lumad*.

"Residents like me who are also poor are the ones always willing to help them," she said.

The city government has provided food and other provisions, as well as assistance to the sick. Every morning, each family is served breakfast of coffee, instant noodles, rice and canned sardines. The rest of the day, they are on their own going around the city and asking for Christmas gifts.

Families usually accumulate a sack full of used clothes and presents.

After Christmas, trucks fielded by the city government will be transporting them back to their communities. They are allowed to stay in the city for their holiday pursuits only until Dec. 26.

Most of the *lumad* are ready to go home to spend New Year's Eve with enough food stocks. This has become their tradition of sorts.

Christianity

Montero's community learned to ask for gifts during Christmas after they were converted into Christianity by Baptist missionaries.

Datu Monico Cayog, secretary general of Pasaka, a confederation of indigenous peoples' organizations in Southern Mindanao, says the *lumad* do not celebrate Christmas but practice the act of giving.

Tribal members who have not yet assimilated the ways of the lowlanders have been sharing and providing everything they have with the community.

There is no need to go down to the city and beg for anything, Cayog said. "Most of the *lumad* do not understand the whole point why Christmas is being celebrated," he said, adding:

AN ATA-MANOBO family from the hinterlands of Davao prepares to serenade city dwellers with their unique songs and dances, hoping to receive holiday presents. PHOTOS BY DENNIS JAY SANTOS

"We are being taught to ask and beg during Christmas when before we know about Christmas, we do not have to do that."

Dole-outs

The people are being told to accept poverty in the mountains as unchanging and this being used so they would give up their lands, he said. Most of them are being conditioned to look forward to December when help and Christmas gifts are abundant, although farming is what they did throughout the year.

"The practice of [receiving] dole-outs does not really help us *lumad*. It means forgetting that our lives depend on our environment—the forests, rivers and animals that live in it," Cayog said.

"Before, we have no Christmas Day to look forward to. The only festivity we celebrate is the thanksgiving to our god, *Magbabaya* (giver), for our bountiful harvest," he added.

According to the tribal leader, their culture was further destroyed when the *lumad* had to sing and dance in exchange for Christmas gifts.

"But the best Christmas we can receive from the people from the city and the government is respect for our rights to our lands and peace. So there will be no logging and mining companies, plantations and other projects that will drive them away from our lands," he said.

'Kaamulan Festival' strengthens ties among Higaonon folk

By Ryan D. Rosauro
Iligan City

ASSEMBLED AROUND A BONFIRE, HIGAONON people from the hinterland village of Rogongon in Iligan City stared at the *balyan* (tribal priest), listening intently to his chanting narration of tribal history.

Known as the *kaliga*, the narration elicited nodding heads among old people, while the younger ones grapple to understand its meaning.

The tribe was gathered for the final evening of the "Kaamulan Festival," a tribal tradition that can be likened to the Yuletide season of the Christians. "Kaamulan" comes from the tribal word *pag-amol-amol*, meaning to come together.

While Christmas is a family celebration, the Kaamulan is primarily a communal festivity that brings together the families of a traditionally clannish Higaonon community. It is the single-most important social gathering throughout the year.

Waning practice

Unlike Christmas, the symbolism, meaning and manners of expression of the Kaamulan have remained the same, although its practice has been waning as the younger generations are increasingly weaned away from it by modern culture.

Customarily, the festival is observed at the end of the season of harvesting the tribe's major agricultural crop, usually October. It is during this time of the year when each family has bounties to offer to their ancestors and Diwata (God), as well as provide for visiting relatives and fellow tribes people from other places.

But for a generation now, the Higaonon in Iligan are holding it every December.

Balyan and *datu* (community leaders) decide the schedule and duration of the festivities. Traditionally, it lasts for nine days and ends on an evening when a lunar phase starts.

The recent Rogongon Kaamulan lasted nine days and ended before the full moon. An earlier festival in nearby Kalilangan village ended before the first quarter moon. Later this month, the Kaamulan in Limunsudan village will wind up towards the start of the new moon.

Like Christmas or the feast of a town's patron saint, the Kaamulan brings back home tribesfolk who have long been absent from the community, temporarily or permanently, and recharges them with the sense of origin and ancestry.

Recollection

A significant feature of the festival is the *kaliga*, a recollection of the story of the tribe from their ancestor up until its most recent travails.

The recitation of such long tale is divided into the number of days the festival will be staged. It is assigned among the number of *balyan* in the community.

At around 7 p.m., during which the rituals are held, the *kaliga* kicks off the ceremonies.

According to Madi Diacat, a Higaonon development worker, the *kaliga* serves to remind them of their shared past, while the recent tales apprise those who have left the community of developments in the land of their birth.

After the narration, a succession of songs and dances are performed. The festivities last until all the fuel wood for the bonfire is consumed, probably until the early morning.

Usually, the rituals are staged inside a tribal hall or square, or someplace that is a hallowed ground. When no such venue can be found, the Rogongon people celebrate in the public market, sometimes hosting gambling activities.

Reunited

The *balyan* "wash" away the impropriety with the blood of native chicken and implore Diwata's indulgence.

During the day, the people gather for the reunion, exchanging tales. For those who are mere acquaintances, it is a time for deepening personal bonds, and for those who have been absent for quite a time, for renewing ties.

Special

Many of the Higaonon in Iligan's hinterlands look up to the Kaamulan as a time for them to reunite with relatives in Bukidnon, the place of origin of their ancestors. A number of them have known each other only by names told by their forebears.

The Higaonon inhabit the still lush mountain that is shared by the provinces of Misamis Oriental and Bukidnon, and Iligan. Some of them, although they trace their ancestry to the Higaonon, have Maranao influences as missionaries of Lanao introduced Islam to their communities. Those who are of Higaonon-Maranao mix are called Kolibugan.

For the Rogongon tribesfolk, holding the festival is doubly significant. They were not able to hold one last year and hence their leaders feel that their community is somewhat cursed.

A HIGAONON woman performs during the Kaamulan Festival held in Bukidnon early this year. Similar festivals that serve as opportunities for clan reunions have been held in other parts of the province and neighboring villages. GRACE CANTAL-ALBASIN

This year, the village has suffered several maladies. Many children became sick, their crops and livestock struck by diseases, and many cases of theft have been reported, indicating a breakdown of discipline and order.

Diacat said the Rogongon Kaamulan was, in so many ways, a coping mechanism and a humble resubmission to the cultural norms their ancestors have bequeathed them.

Thanksgiving

On the last day of the festival, the evening rituals included other intentions, like thanksgiving and petitions for a bright year ahead, personal and community well-being.

Diacat also said that during the final ceremonies, a rite could be held purposely to repair damaged relationships between individuals and families. Although major disputes are usually managed through a different process, the festival serves as an opportunity to resolve conflicts.

The concluding festivities last until daybreak, after which the visitors journey back to their homes by mid-morning.

During the Kaamulan, the people are restricted from doing anything that diverts their attention from partaking of the spirit and meaning of the festival. This means foregoing farming and other livelihood activities.

"(Even) our ancestors are with us throughout the festivities," Diacat said.

NBP inmates explore world of art

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THEIRS MAY BE A WORLD UNAFfected by the holiday rush, although with the start of the yuletide season every year, a group of inmates at the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) work feverishly like Santa's elves.

Instead of Santa's gaily decorated workshop, however, the 56 men work in a small hut, its walls covered with their art work.

And while the elves assemble toys and stuff Christmas socks with candy canes, the inmates burn pictures and religious images into pieces of wood.

"We call this art wood burning or pyrography," 48-year-old Reynaldo Bajaro, an inmate who has been teaching the technique to other inmates for several years, told the INQUIRER.

Bajaro, who is serving time for murder, said he has been doing pyrography since 1998.

"One can find this art only here inside the prison," he said.

In pyrography, an artist etches images on a piece of bleached wood using a lighted mosquito coil or "katol." He blows on the coil to keep it aglow as he starts drawing.

Wood burning, along with the use of watercolor, charcoal and acrylic, is a subject offered to inmates at the NBP maximum security compound under the Alternative Learning System (ALS)-Arts and Sign curriculum.

The ALS has 28 inmates taking up basic arts and sign while another 28 are working on their masteral degrees. It takes about five years to complete the course.

The hut in the middle of the compound serves as their classroom. This is where Art theories and Math, English, Christian Formation and lessons on the Constitution are held on weekdays.

But in the afternoon until late at night, and on weekends, the hut becomes their workshop.

"We have many job orders from clients during the holidays. They give them away as gifts," Bajaro said.

Most of their clients are religious volunteers who regularly visit the prison. Their work are often brought by these volunteers abroad as "pasalubong," he said.

"With this kind of art, you need to have patience because it takes a lot of time," Bajaro explained.

It takes him about a week to finish a 16-inch by 20-inch portrait, if he were to work from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m., he said.

When the INQUIRER visited the workshop, Bajaro's students were propped up silently in front of their easel, their eyes focused on their work. The scent of "katol" inside the hut was overwhelming.

The downside of the art, he pointed out, were the fumes from the mosquito coil. "It is quite not good for the health. There are some of us who even cough up blood due to the smoke coming from the coil," he said.

However, Bajaro and his colleagues have already devised a new technology—an electric-generated nichrome wire that allows them to adjust the degree of heat applied on the wood.

But he stressed that before they could apply the technology full-time, they need the permission and support of the institution.

No one knows how pyrography became an art medium inside the NBP. But Bajaro said the technique evolved from the process of making designs on bamboo products.

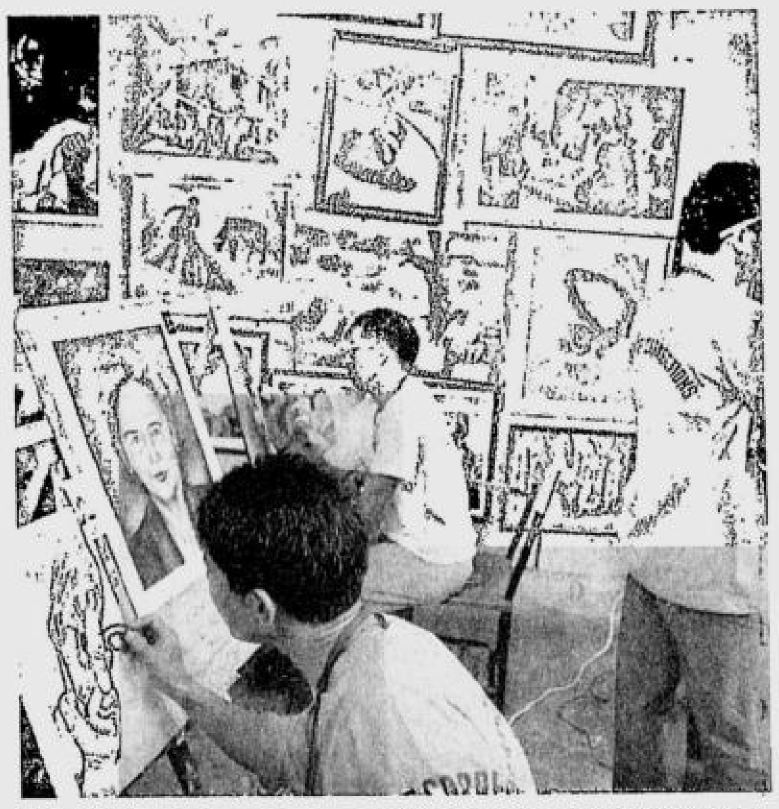
Two weeks after he set foot in the NBP in 1998 to serve a life sentence for killing a politician, Bajaro became fond of wood burning.

Later on, wood burning became not only a favorite pastime but his source of income inside the prison. In the early days, he sold his paintings, such as the Last Supper, for P150 each.

Now, Bajaro's paintings sell from P2,000 to P3,000, depending on the size. But he allots a part of his earning for the school.

He added that the ALS curriculum was one way of helping his fellow inmates become productive while serving time instead of thinking about the life they left outside.

"We keep ourselves busy with wood burning so we will not think about Christmas outside these walls," Bajaro said.



PRISONERS at the maximum security compound of the New Bilibid Prisons bury themselves in art to forget the lives they've left behind outside the prison walls.

ROGER MARGALLO

FOR JUST one day, street children in Metro Manila forgot about their problems as they were treated to a day of fun at Fiesta Carnival.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Street children treated to day of fun

By DJ Yap

FOR THE PAST 15 YEARS, THOUSANDS OF street children have always gathered for a special party during the holiday season. And every time, they go home with food, with shirts on their backs, and smiles in their eyes.

Christmas, after all, belongs to the young—whether they live in palatial houses or in rickety shanties, according to the Laura Vicu Foundation, a charitable institution.

Last Friday, the nonstock, nonprofit organization gathered some 1,500 children living in the streets of Metro Manila and nearby provinces for "Parti-han 2005," a Christmas party for street and urban poor youth.

A tradition that the LVF has kept since its founding in 1990, the annual Christmas party is aimed at making street children "feel loved" during the Yuletide season, said Sr. Marivic Sta. Ana, LVF executive director.

Christmas is an ideal time for neglected children to see and feel that they too deserve kindness and generosity from the community, she said.

The children, aged 7-16, from depressed areas in Manila, Quezon City, Pasay City, Laguna and Pampanga, trooped to the Elephant World in Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City for the party.

Assisted by volunteers from Vides Philippines, they played games, went on free rides at the carnival, ate snacks, sang carols and danced to the latest tunes.

At the end of the day, each child went home with a basket of food, shirts, school supplies, and soap and shampoo.

The goods and giveaways came from corporate donors like the RFM Group of Companies, Constellation Travels, and Jollibee, as well as private individuals like Francisco Dizon and Joey Sison, said Sr. Maria Josefina Carrasco, LVF finance officer.

Araneta Center, on the other hand, provided free use of the facilities and the carnival rides for the street children, she added.

Owing to economic hardships, this year's Christmas party was a little more modest than previous years, Carrasco said. "We used to have 5,000 street children joining the party," she said.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 25, 2005
Christmas Day

1st Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

The good news of liberation

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those
who bring good news,
who herald peace and happiness,
who proclaim salvation
and announce to Zion: "Your God is king!"
Together your watchmen
raise their voices in praise and song;
they see Yahweh face to face returning to Zion.
Break into shouts of joy,
O ruins of Jerusalem,
for Yahweh consoles his people
and redeems Jerusalem.
Yahweh has bared his holy arm
in the eyes of the nations;
all the ends of the earth, in alarm,
will witness God's salvation.

2nd Reading: Hebrews 1:1-6

Now God speaks through His Son

God has spoken in the past to our ancestors through the prophets, in many different ways, although never completely; but in our times he has spoken definitively to us through his Son.

He is the one God appointed heir of all things, since through him he unfolded the stages of the world.

He is the radiance of God's Glory and bears the stamp of God's hidden being, so that his powerful word upholds the universe. And after taking away sin, he took his place at the right hand of the divine Majesty in heaven.

So he is now far superior to angels just as the name he received sets him apart from them. To what angel did God say: You are my son, I have begotten you today? and to what angel did he promise: I shall be a father to him and he will be a son to me? On sending his Firstborn to the world, God says: Let all the angels adore him.

Gospel: John 1:1-18 or 1:1-5,9-14

And the Word became flesh

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God and the Word was God; he was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him and without him nothing came to be. Whatever has come to be, found life in him, life which for humans was also light. Light that shines in the dark: light that darkness could not overcome. A man came, sent by God; his name was John. He came to bear witness, as a witness to introduce the Light so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light but a witness to introduce the Light.

For the Light was coming into the world, the true Light that enlightens everyone. He was already in the world and through him the world was made, the very world that did not know him. He came to his own, yet his own people did not receive him; but all who have received him he empowers to become children of God for they believe in his Name.

These are born, but without seed or carnal desire or will of man: they are born of God. And the Word was made flesh; he had his tent pitched among us, and we have seen his Glory, the Glory of the only Son coming from the Father: fullness of truth and loving-kindness.

John bore witness to him openly, saying: This is the one who comes after me, but he is already ahead of me for he was before me.

From his fullness we have all received, favor upon favor. For God had given us the Law through Moses, but Truth and Loving-kindness came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God-the-Only-Son made him known: the one who is in and with the Father.

Commentary

A child is born to us! But who is he really? He is, from the beginning before creation, the Word of God. And this child is light that darkness cannot overcome. And the world, and even his own don't know him or receive him. But to those who see this child will give the power to become the children of God with him. The Word is made our flesh and pitches his tent among us. God has come home to dwell with his creation, his children on earth. History has been penetrated to its core, its heart and we see God's glory—the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, full of truth and loving-kindness. Do we see this glory? Because of the Incarnation do we see God's glory on the face of every human being? Look in love!

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METROBRIEFS

Too pricey?

DELIKADO SA TAO, PATI SA BULSA NYO!

TRYING to dissuade people from using firecrackers? Rising prices could be the key. "We are hoping the rising prices of firecrackers will serve as deterrent," Marikina City Police chief Senior Supt. Manuel Gaerlan said. Eastern Police District director Chief Supt. Oscar Valenzuela also observed only a few stalls were selling firecrackers in the eastern part of Metro Manila. Firecrackers have been traditional causes of many injuries and accidents during Christmas and New Year. To avoid this, Gaerlan said the city police in Marikina had been coordinating with market officials to monitor the sale of firecrackers. But aside from money matters, Gaerlan said making people aware of the dangers of using powerful and prohibited fire crackers would be the best way to prevent accidents. Among the firecrackers considered illegal are *bawang*, whistle bomb, *pla-pla*, super *lolo* and *lolo* thunder.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Stronger partnership sought

A STRONGER linkage between the Quezon City government and residents is Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr.'s only Christmas wish this year. The mayor said all he wanted for the holidays was "a healthy and continued collaboration between the city government and city residents." Belmonte delivered his Christmas message during the executive staff meeting at the Quezon City Hall Bulwagan on Wednesday, The challenge for the city government now is to sustain or even surpass the gains it has achieved in the past four years, such as a successful fiscal management program and a more aggressive tax collection, he said. "The biggest challenge then was how to get things going, with empty city coffers and heavy debts," Belmonte said. But the city government has since forged ahead, making Quezon City "one of the most financially stable cities in the country," thanks in part to a strong partnership between the city government and the private sector, he said.

DJ Yap

High-tech record keeping

NABABAWASAN NA DIN ANG SAKIT NG ULO AT LIKOD KO!

RECORDS of criminal offenders may soon be just a click away for Quezon City police investigators wanting to solve a case. Realizing the need to streamline police information, councilors have introduced a resolution mandating the computerization of records of the Quezon City Police District. Under the measure proposed by Restituto Malangen and 17 other councilors, records of crime, wanted persons, clearances, and other relevant police documents in the city will be encoded and stored in a computer database. Now on third and final reading, the proposed resolution was intended to provide police with easy access to information about persons being investigated for crime. The resolution further authorizes QCPD director Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr. to prepare the guidelines for its implementation.

DJ Yap

Hospital marks centennial

THE MARY Johnston Hospital in Tondo, Manila will be celebrating its centennial next year. All former medical and nursing staff, employees, friends and those who were born at the hospital are invited to join various activities lined up for the event. Among the activities are the Dr. Rebecca Parish Memorial Lecture, fun run, concert, centennial book publication, commemorative stamp issue, thanksgiving service, and an alumni homecoming at the Manila Hotel. For more information, call 245-4021 to 25 local 312 or log on at www.mjh.org.ph.

Enchanted fireworks display

ENCHANTED Kingdom's Spettacolo Pirotecnico or Fireworks of Arts gives the night sky a magnificent glow this Christmas season. With extended orchestration to "Carol of the Bells," an 18-minute spectacle of lasers, computerized lighting and pyrotechnics will once again delight visitors on Dec. 25, 26 and Jan. 1. Spettacolo Pirotecnico was first shown last summer as part of Enchanted Kingdom's lineup of festive activities to mark its 10th year. It was recently awarded "Best Fireworks of the Year" by the National Product Quality Excellence Awards. Dennis N. Cruz, Enchanted Kingdom's vice president for marketing and business development, said the theme park regards its fireworks presentation as an art form.

3 hurt in Valenzuela plastic factory fire

A BIG FIRE RAZED A PLASTIC factory for several hours yesterday in Valenzuela City, leaving three persons hurt and damaging manufacturing equipment and materials.

As of this writing, the fire has not been put out, although firefighters had already contained it.

The blaze hit the Asian Plastic Center at 5039 Sto. Rosario Street, Mapulang Lupa at 6:35 a.m., quickly spreading in the warehouse-type structure, fire officials said.

The fire was believed to have originated from the pellet section in the walled compound, but the cause was still under investigation, according to a report by arson investigator FO3 Melchor Gonzales.

The fire consumed highly flammable materials and equipment, believed to be worth millions of pesos, though Bureau of Fire Protection officials could not immediately give an accurate estimate.

The general manager, identified as James Lee, reportedly tried to go back to the burning building for some belongings, but sustained burns in the process, fire officials said.

Lee had first-degree burns in the left leg and blisters in the right leg. Security guard Alex Cantillon, 36, on the other hand, suffered third-degree burns in the face and ear, Gonzales said.

A fire volunteer, Michael Cruz, 30, also sustained minor burns in his right leg, the official added.

Firefighters found it hard to put out the fire because of the flammability of the plastic materials, officials said.

The fire was confined at 10:34 a.m.

DJ Yap

Parañaque mayor gets Christmas gift

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A FITTING CHRISTMAS GIFT.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) en banc has affirmed Parañaque City Mayor Florencio Bernabe's victory in the May 2004 elections after it junked a motion filed by his rival, former Mayor Pablo Olivarez.

"The instant Motion for Reconsideration of the [Oct. 5, 2005] resolution of the Commission (Second Division) is hereby denied for lack of merit," Chair Benjamin Abalos said in his order.

In its resolution, the Comelec's second division had dismissed Olivarez's electoral protest and had affirmed that Bernabe was the duly elected city mayor. The decision was based on its findings that the ballots in Olivarez's favor were tampered.

The poll body's en banc decision to uphold the resolution issued by the second division was signed on Dec. 6. It was released, however, only on Dec. 20.

Olivarez had also filed a motion asking Commissioners Mehol Sadain and Florentino Tuazon Jr. to inhibit themselves as both were "prejudiced and antagonistic against him."

But the Comelec en banc denied the motion.

"The motion for inhibition was, nevertheless, denied for lack of just and valid ground," said the decision.

"This recent development only proves that the truth will prevail and that I once again commend the Comelec for being faithful to their duty in defending the inviolability of the ballot," Bernabe said in a statement.

He also vowed to continue implementing programs and projects that will further contribute to the progress of the city and his constituents.

On the other hand, the Comelec ordered its law department to investigate Olivarez on allegations of ballot tampering and submit its findings within 30 days for appropriate actions.

METRO

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil

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Grandpa inspires hope by teaching doll making

By Prosy B. Montesines
Contributor

CASTILLO with his students at the Mandaluyong Manpower Development Center. RODEL ROTONI

RUBEN CASTILLO, A 63-YEAR-old grandfather, could have gone into early retirement three years ago. He, however, opted to continue working to give hope to impoverished and unskilled Filipinos by teaching them the art of making dolls and novelty items.

Each day, indeed, his students at the Mandaluyong Manpower Development Center nurture hope for the future as they begin to learn the techniques of making beautiful dolls from scraps of cloth, yarn, cardboard, and plaster of Paris.

Castillo always tells his students to consider the craft more as an art than a money-making project.

"This will add charm to the dolls and make them truly attractive to the customers," he said. "Each doll is a work of art that requires patience and attention to every detail."

Reluctant student

Arnold A. Occena, an 18-year-old high school graduate, came to Manila in October to enroll in an electrical course at the center. But he came a bit too late; the class was already full. Not wanting to waste time, he signed up for the remaining slot in Castillo's doll and novelty making course.

At first, Occena was not so happy about his choice, but later on, making dolls began to fascinate him as he learned its techniques and intricacies. The more dolls he made, the more enjoyable the course became.

TALES OF THE CITY

Another student, 47-year-old Marilou M. Lipana, looks at doll making as her "passport" to a better life right here in her own country. In 1987, she left her children to work in a mushroom packaging plant in Japan. To ease her loneliness, she would use her spare time making Japanese novelty items, including greeting cards. She got her ideas from Japanese crafts magazine.

But when the problems of living and working abroad became almost unbearable, Lipana decided to return to the Philippines.

Lipana found out, however, that work was not easy to find in the country. To make a little money, she made greeting cards and sold them in schools through her nieces and nephews.

When she enrolled in Castillo's class, she realized that Filipinos, with their creative talents, could be as skillful as the Japanese in designing and making dolls and novelties.

"What we need here is adequate support from the government in furthering our skills and putting up livelihood projects," she said.

Another student, 35-year-old Jun Matias, has sold a number of Japanese flat dolls and princess dolls to friends and acquaintances. A larger capital is needed, however, to expand his production.

RP is 'Italy of Asia'

"There are many local firms that are engaged in making dolls and novelties," Castillo said.

"Most of them are in Metro Manila and suburbs as well as in Cebu and Negros Occidental. Starting as micro-scale cottage industries, many of them have grown as exporters. Do you know that our creativity and skills have earned for our country the title 'Italy of Asia'?" he added.

The three are grateful to Castillo for sharing with them every technique he knows about doll making—from designing, pattern making, mold making, assembling, sewing, and making accessories.

"Others blessed with that kind of talent and expertise would have kept their knowledge to themselves for business gains," Lipana said.

Castillo said he first became interested in doll making through the crafts magazines that his aunts in the United States sent him from time to time.

"The doll artists featured in the magazines inspired me to give the craft a try," he said.

Later on, when he learned how to sculpt doll heads and make master molds with plaster of Paris (escayola), he began making Filipiniana dolls which caught the interest of novelty stall owners at the Mandaluyong public market. His enthusiasm grew when his first consignment of six Japanese dolls sold in just one day.

RUBEN Castillo: Master doll maker. He could have gone into business for himself to make a lot of money but he prefers to share his expertise with the needy. RODEL ROTONI

Just a hobby

Despite his success, however, Castillo treats his craft more as a hobby than a profit-making venture.

Some businessmen have prodded him to embark on a business-size production but Castillo said he was not cut out for business.

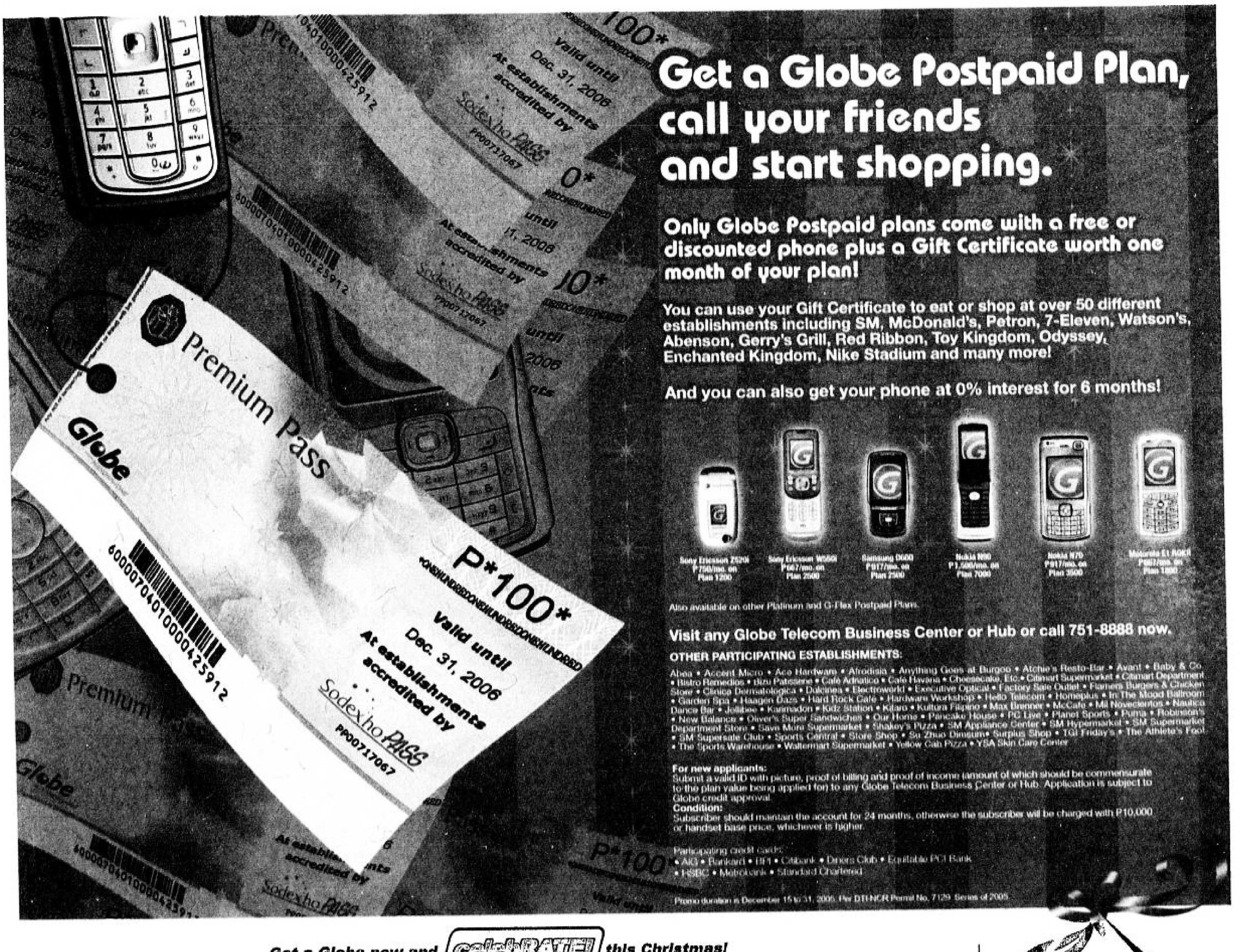
What he did was set up a small home-based workshop where he taught neighbors and out-of-school youths how to make dolls.

The Mandaluyong city administration office took notice of his talent as a craftsman and asked him to teach at the manpower development center.

Castillo gave credit to Mayor Neptali Gonzales and the Mandaluyong city administration office for their efforts in promoting livelihood skills training through the Mandaluyong Manpower Development Center.

A student pays a tuition of only P50 for a three-month crafts course which is also open to non-Mandaluyong residents.

The center is located in the Hulo Bliss Compound on Coronado Street, Mandaluyong City.



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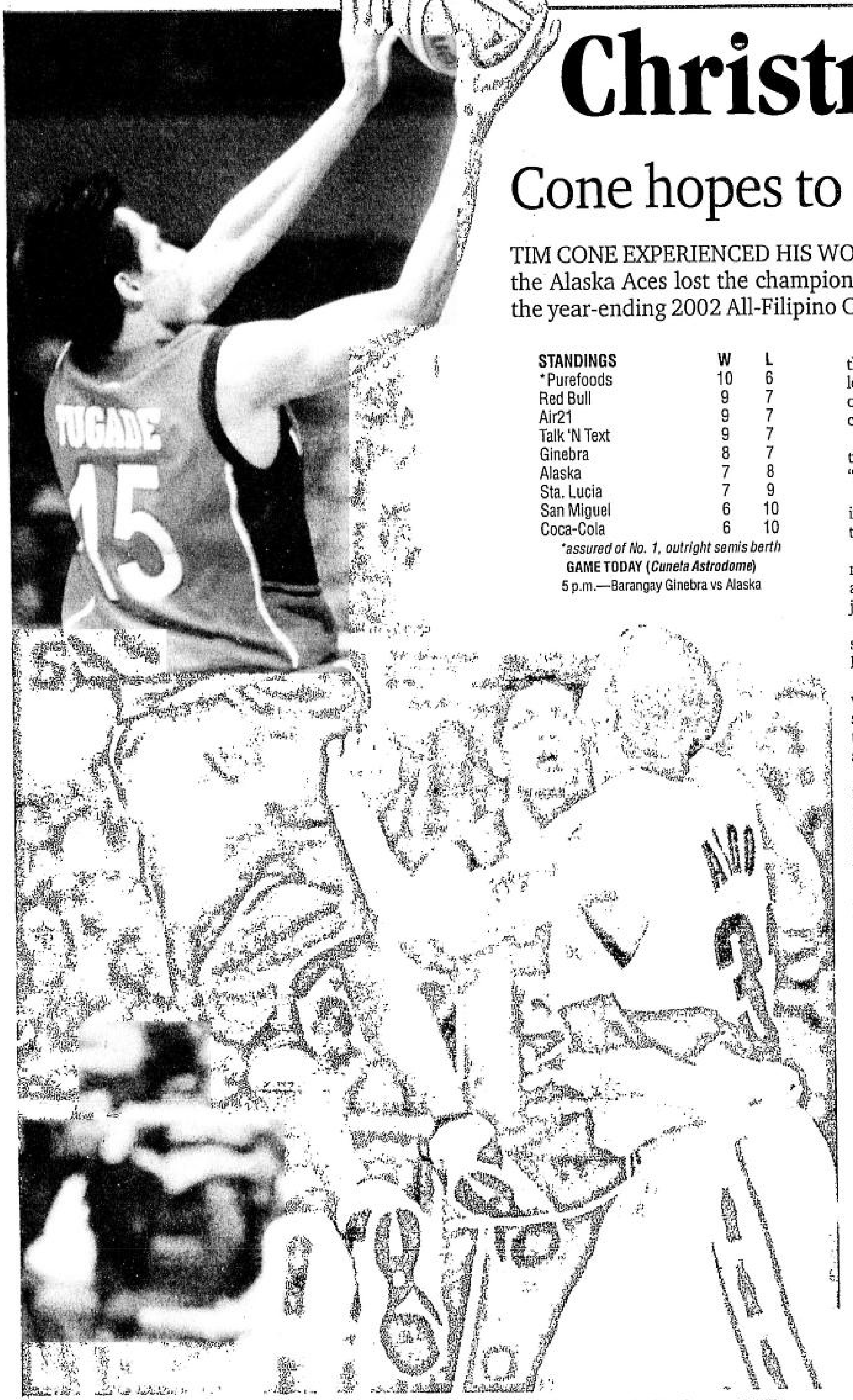


LORDY TUGADE of Red Bull floats for a basket against Coca-Cola's John Arigo Friday night. The Barako won, 78-77. ERIK ARAZAS

Christmas Day affair

Cone hopes to erase ghost of yuletide past

TIM CONE EXPERIENCED HIS WORST HOLIDAY SEASON WHEN the Alaska Aces lost the championship to the Coca-Cola Tigers in the year-ending 2002 All-Filipino Cup right on Christmas Day.

STANDINGS	W	L
*Purefoods	10	6
Red Bull	9	7
Air21	9	7
Talk 'N Text	9	7
Ginebra	8	7
Alaska	7	8
Sta. Lucia	7	9
San Miguel	6	10
Coca-Cola	6	10

*assured of No. 1, outright semis berth

GAME TODAY (*Cuneta Astrodome*)

5 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs Alaska

Thus, flunking again at this time of the year is the last thing on Cone's mind when his Aces tackle the Barangay Ginebra Kings today at the close of the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference classification round at the Cuneta Astrodome.

"I don't want to remember it," said Cone of that pivotal Game 7 which slipped from his grip. "It was the saddest Christmas of my life."

But more than redemption, the Aces are seeking for an eighth victory in 16 games that will push them up to No. 5 going into the wildcard phase.

In that situation, the Aces will meet the winner of the survivor playoff between Coca-Cola and San Miguel where the Beermen need just one win to advance.

A loss, however, will relegate the Aces to sixth place and best-of-three duel with the Sta. Lucia Realtors in the next round.

Definitely, it won't be a breeze for Alaska with the Kings also badly needing the win to secure a playoff with the Red Bull Barako for the second and last automatic semifinal slot.

"We'll focus on what's in front of us first before thinking about the playoff," Ginebra coach Siot Tanquingcen, the reigning PBA Press Corps' coach of the year, said.

The Gin Kings, who won their only Christmas game over the Phone Pals last year, are slightly favored, having found a gem of an import in Chris Porter, a former Golden State Warrior who debuted with 31 points and 24 rebounds against Talk 'N Text.

"We have a good import but we still need to take care of business,"said Tanquingcen.

Depending heavily on the Aces are the Phone Pals, who won over San Miguel Beer to finish the classification round at 9-7 but needs an Alaska win over Ginebra to seal a semifinal playoff with Red Bull.

"As long as Don (Allado) and Sonny (Thoss) can control the boards, opportunities could open up for him (Odell Bradley)," said Cone. "He's a thinking player and has lots of offensive skills. It's just a matter of getting his confidence."

Bradley, who bumped off Tee McClary from the Alaska roster, will have his hands full against Porter, a collegiate star out of Auburn University in the US NCAA who replaced the injured Sean Lampley.

"Had we known he's (Porter) available, we could have gotten him," said Cone. "He's on our wish list but he's not in the radar when we were looking for an import."

THERE will be no room for holiday cheer between Alaska's Sonny Thoss (front) and Ginebra's Andy Seigle today. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

If the Kings lose again to the Aces,they would end up No. 6 and meet the seventh-seeded Realtors in a best-of-three wildcard series.

Should that happen, Air21 obtains an outright quarterfinal seat along with the loser of the Red Bull-Talk 'N Text semifinal playoff.

The two quarterfinalists will wait for the winners of the wildcard phase where the fifth, sixth, Sta. Lucia and the winner of the survivor playoff between Coca-Cola and San Miguel go into a crossover best-of-three series. *June Navarro*

Choice of 10 key sports a concern of all—Puentevella

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMmittee must only recommend, not appoint, the national sports associations that will make it to the "Chosen 10" that will be given massive funding and attention from the government and private sector.

The sentiment came from POC vice president, Rep. Monico Puentevella who said the selection process must be scrutinized not only by the POC and the NSAs but with the help of the Philippine Sports Commission, where the funding will pass through.

"I personally think that the POC must only recommend," Puentevella told the INQUIRER by phone from his hometown in Bacolod City.

POC spokesperson and former Gintong Alay director Joey Romasanta earlier said the local Olympic body, which is composed of some 40-plus NSAs, will determine the composition of the elite 10 sports that will again carry out the mission of producing the country's first ever Olympic gold medal.

President Arroyo last Thursday had ordered the concentration of attention on only 10 sports disciplines that will be given lavish funding and proper with an eye on the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She singled out boxing and also mentioned diving and archery among the priority sports.

Puentevella, however, agreed with Romasanta that selection must be based on sports played in the Olympics, just like what Thailand did in its frenetic pursuit to win in the Olympics.

"Wushu, bowling and billiards are good even in the Asian Games, but we must pick Olympic sports first," said Puentevella, who is the president of the Asian and Philippine federations in weightlifting, an Olympic mainstay.

Good tidings! Bautista triumphs anew

BOHOLANO REY "BOOM BOOM" BAUTISTA proved he not only can whack and crack yesterday as he survived a second-round scare to outpoint Mexican Gerardo Espinoza in their eight-round bout at the Sycuan Resort and Casino in El Cajon, California.

After a very close opening round, the dynamite-fisted Espinoza took the lead by hurting Bautista after a torrid exchange then knocking down the Filipino fighter with a thundering right near the end of the round.

Bautista, the reigning WBO Asia Pacific bantamweight champion, regained his composure at the break then went on to outclass the game Mexican the rest of the way.

The Filipino capped his comeback by totally dominating the Tijuana fighter in the eighth which proved crucial in the end.

Judges José Cobián and Fritz Warner both scored it 76-75 which meant that they had the fight even after seven rounds.

The third judge, Pat Russell, had Bautista the clear winner at 77-74.

"This fight provided Bautista his litmus test. This should put to rest insinuations that he is just a knockout fighter," said Sammy 'Don King' Gello-ani, Bautista's promoter in the Philippines, in an interview right after the fight.

"This proves that the boy also has the skills to make it big," he added.

The win improved Bautista's unblemished record to 19 wins with 14 KOs, and further boosted his stock in the international scene.

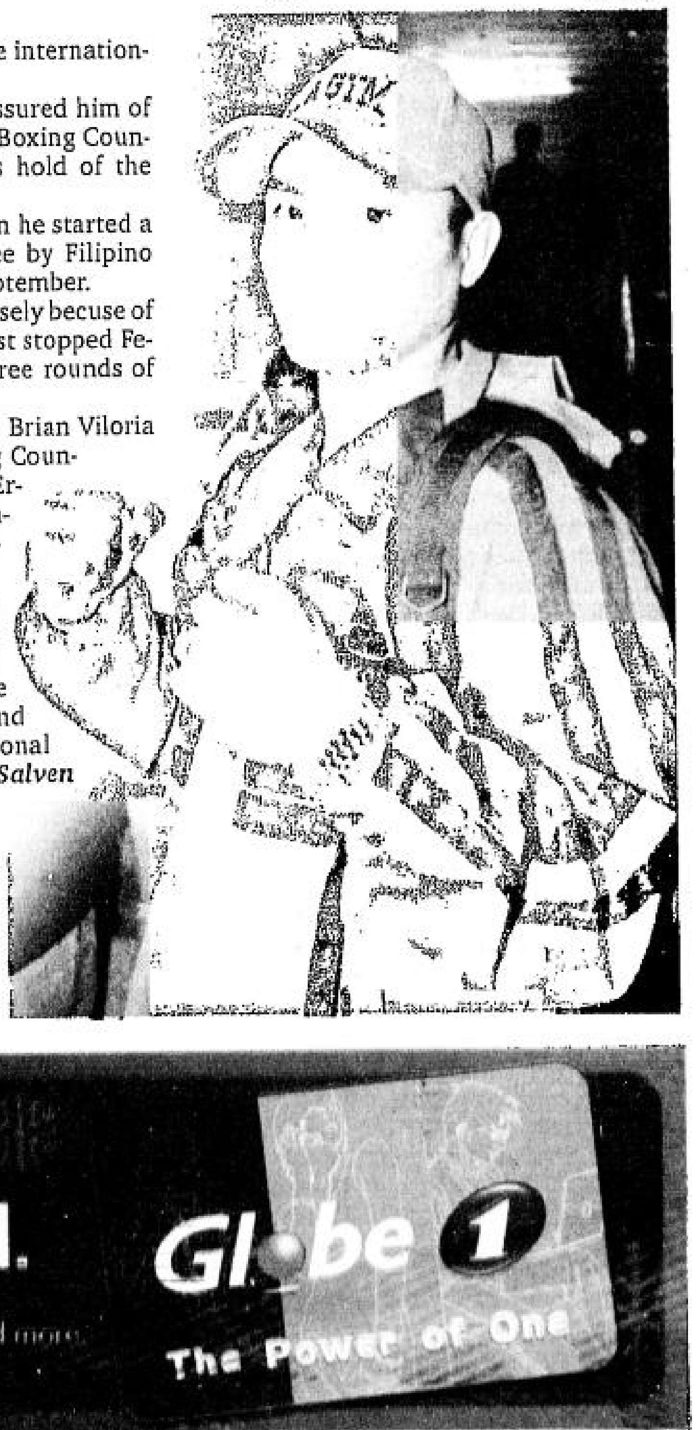
The victory also virtually assured him of an improvement in his World Boxing Council ratings, and solidified his hold of the WBO No. 1 position.

Bautista gained notice when he started a three-fight, all-knockout spree by Filipino fighters in Los Angeles last September.

Known as Boom Boom precisely becuse of his booming fists, Bautista first stopped Felix Murillo of Colombia in three rounds of an eight-rounder.

Hawaii-based Fil-American Brian Viloria then dethroned World Boxing Council light flyweight champion Eric Ortiz of Mexico with an impeccable first-round demolition.

Manny Pacquiao capped the rare display by halting veteran journeyman Hector Velasquez of Mexico in the sixth round of their 12-round clash for the WBC International super featherweight crown. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*



NOT EVEN a knockdown suffered in the second round could slow Bohol superstar Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista in his California bout against Gerardo Espinoza.

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PHILRACOM CLASSIC OPEN

Wild Orchid bags P1-M pot

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—WILD ORchid broke out of the gates hard and showed too much class in thumping the 2005 Philracom Classic Open Championship field yesterday under ace rider Fernando Raquel to claim the P1 million top prize.

The three-year-old imported filly from Australia was practically unchallenged for the whole 2,000-meter race, dispatching Real Spicy's courageous challenge in the far turn to win by five lengths over the handsome colt in a record-equaling 2:04.5 at the San Lazaro Park here.

Wild Orchid's time matched the all-time record held by Stowaway Lass, another imported charger who withdrew from this race because of a foot injury.

Incidentally, Stowaway Lass established that time in a field that also included Wild Orchid and Real Spicy during the Mr. Speaker Cup also at this ultra-modern racetrack.

Still, Wild Orchid's smashing wire-to-wire triumph clearly emphasized who's the best in the land with only Real Spicy putting up a fight for the progeny of American stallion High Yield out of Irish broodmare Dove Orchid.

Gold Cup

Presidential Gold Cup winner Speed Advantage checked in a badly beaten third, while Cover Girl settled for fourth with Thywillbedone bringing up the rear of the compact field.

Wild Orchid jumped out in front and stayed there, with Real Spicy staying within striking distance only to see his make-or-break attempt in the far turn thwarted when Raquel stepped on the gas and shoved his mount to another sizeable lead.

Wild Orchid submitted quarter clockings of 25-24-26-24-25, an overpowering time considering that she was never really headed and that she came home under minimal punishment from Raquel.

Real Spicy, the winner of the Triple Crown's third leg, settled for the P376,750 runner-up's purse under the initial handling of Jesse B. Guce, who failed to avert a fourth straight loss for his mount.

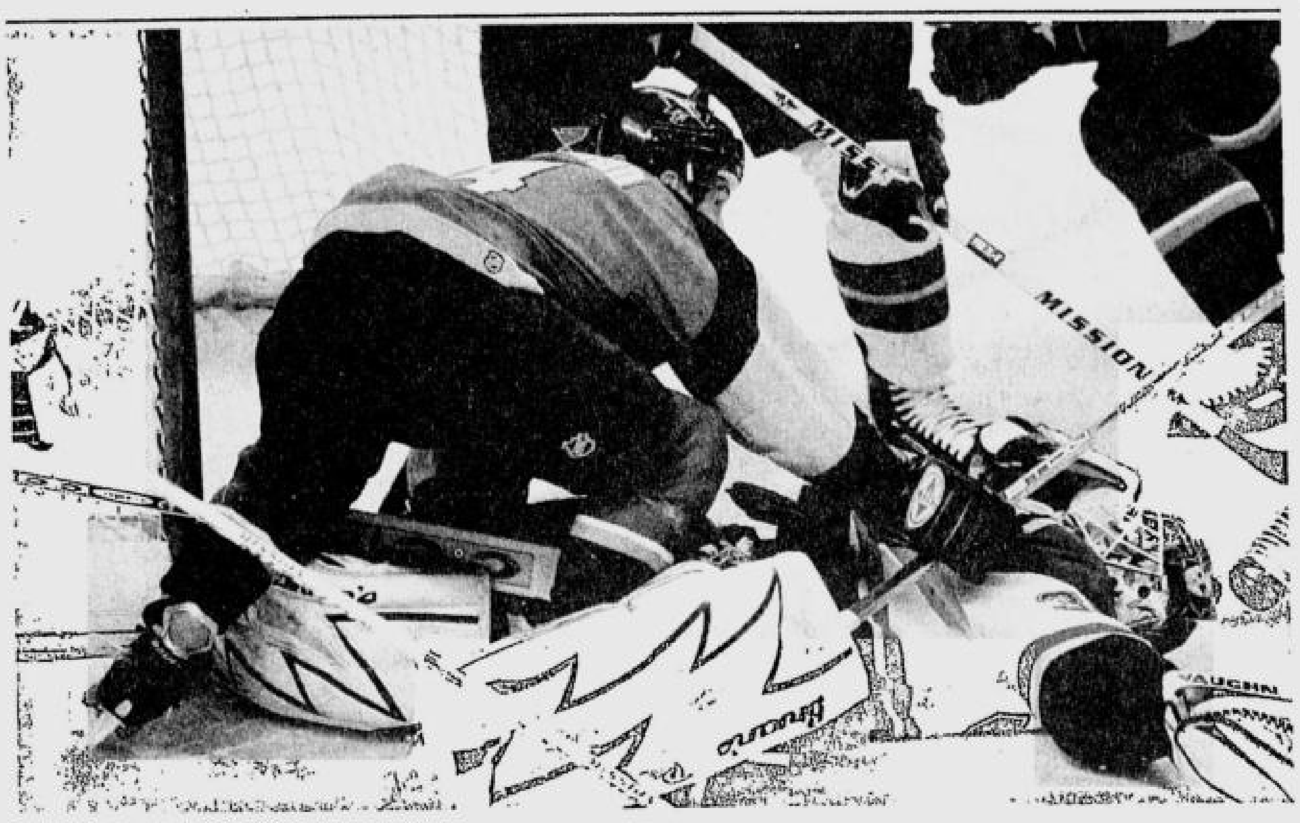
Meanwhile, far third choice Cryptorose turned in a dizzying final two quarters under Ronald Baldonido earlier to rout the All-Imported Farewell Stakes field.

Baldonido wheeled the 7-year-old bay mare into the fight nearing the backstretch and then asked for the juice as Cryptorose ended her track career on a smashing note with a three-length win over Royal Lantana for P210,000.

All four entries in the race will be retired for breeding in accordance with the Philracom directive of limiting the careers of imported chargers until they are 7 years old.

Cryptorose clocked two minutes and 10.5 seconds for the 2,000-meter race broken down into quartertimes of 27-25-27-25-26.

Catwalk Pia checked in third.



HEATED ACTION
San Jose Sharks right wing Jonathan Cheechoo, top, stands over St. Louis Blues goalie Jason Bacashihua during a scuffle for possession of the puck in the first period of an NHL hockey game in San Jose, California. AP

Gonzales eyes last GM norm

GRANDMASTER-CANDIDATE JAYSON Gonzales will lead a big Philippine contingent competing in the Singapore Masters International Open chess championship set Dec. 26-30 at the Singapore Intellectual Games Centre in the Bishan Community Club.

Gonzales, board 1 champion of the recent Cong. Butch Pichay Chess Challenge, will go for his third and final GM norm in the strong tournament that will feature seven GMs led by European champion Super GM Zurab Azmaiparashvili (ELO 2658) of Georgia.

Pichay earlier announced he would give cash incentives to the Filipino winner of the tournament or to an RP player getting a GM norm in a bid to boost Philippine chess following the gold medal shutout in the Southeast Asian Games.

"I want to boost the country back to its old place of prominence in the sport," said Pichay.

Also entered in the prestigious event are reigning Asian continental individual champion GM Zhang Zhong (2598) of China, GM Victor Mikhalevski (2554) of Israel, GM Humpy Koneru (2540) of India, defending champion GM Susanto Megaranto (2530) of Indonesia, GM Drazen Sermek (2526) of Slovakia, GM Wu Shaobin (2510) of Singapore, IM Wang Rui (2474) of China, 2005 Penang Open ruler IM Stefan Loeffler (2440) of Germany, IM Jason Goh (2428) of Singapore, IM Gur Mittelman (2425) of Israel, IM Ashot Nadanian (2425) of Armenia, WGM Ruofan Li (2398) and 14-year-old WGM Anya Korke (2222) of Hongkong.

Gonzales, an enlisted personnel of multi-titled Philippine Army, is bidding to become the seventh Filipino grandmaster.

Gonzales got his first GM norm in the 2004 Calvia Open in Calvia, Spain. He obtained his second GM norm in the 2005 Malaysian Open in Kuala Lumpur.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

Roxas, partner top Tantoco golf

ROMY ROXAS AND MODY CERVANTES took the overall low net plum while Jingy Tuason and Manoling Chan copped the overall low gross award in the recent 2005 Ambassador Tantoco's Cup at the Sta. Elena Golf Club course in Laguna.

Roxas and Cervantes also copped the scramble crown and placed second in best-ball play in the unique 27-hole members-only tourney that used three different formats.

Format for the first nine holes was best-ball, shifted to aggregate in the second then scramble in the third nine.

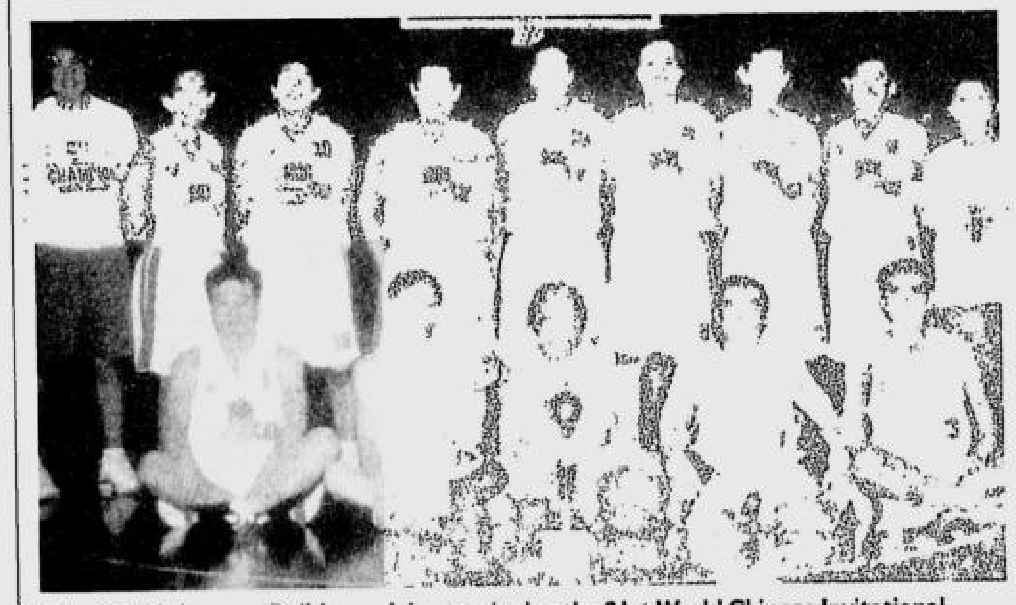
Roxas and Cervantes beat the pairs of Ruben Tan-Jun Alejo and Peter Walker-Surlianti Walker for the scramble award but lost to Jun Enriquez-Shoji Suzuki in the aggregate battle.

Winning the best-ball format were Japanese expatriates Ohira Gozo and Shoji Yoshimoto who finished ahead of Ignacio Maramba-Nel Calo and Kiyuharu Wada-Masatoshi Kimura.

Former national seniors champion Iggy Clavecilla took the individual low gross plum over Oliver Gan and Henry Sy in the event honoring Ambassador Bienvenido Tantoco.

Fred Masigan (Class A), Enriquez (Class B) and Maramba (Class C) were the division winners.

Masigan beat Shoichi Maeda and Mat Lim, Enriquez won over Cervantes and Roxas while Maramba prevailed over Rico Tantoco and Makoto Maegawa.



The PCFBL-Ironcon Builders celebrate winning the 21st World Chinese Invitational Basketball Tournament last Nov. 24-27, 2005 hosted by Evergreen CKSC. The team members are: (seated from left) Victor Chua, Tomas Ang, Jimi Lim, Macario Chuan, Johnson Lao and (standing from left) Bong dela Cruz (consultant), Marcial Angteco, Aristotle Franco, Roy Ching, Johnny Ng, William Lao, Andrew Angtoco, Victor Balboa, and Eugene Ceng.

World slasher set

THE BIGGEST COCKFIGHTING event in the world, The World Slasher Cup Invitational 8-Cock Derby, unfolds on Jan. 17, 19 and 21 at the Araneta Coliseum.

The bi-annual event determines world supremacy in cockfighting. Expected to vie for the world slasher cup title are prominent sportsmen cockers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia, Guam, Japan along with the country's own local gamefowl breeders.

Expected entries from the United States include those of Roger Roberts of Georgia, Ray Alexander of Alabama, Johnny Moore of Tennessee, Chuck Berry of Oklahoma, Brian Cockren of Alabama, Oscar Akins of Tennessee, Larry Barleta of California, Bobby Fairchild of Oklahoma, Paul Fassoth of California, Brad Padgette of Oregon.

Other expected foreign entries are the Lanier Brothers of Florida, Mabanta Brothers of Canada, Sedrefrey Linsangan of Guam, Joey Australia, Rene Medina and Ric de Guzman of California, Goi Goitia of California and Vince Cuyugan of Pittsburg along with many others.

The event will be hosted by Pintakasi of Champions.

Fight schedules are set for the two-cock qualifying round on Jan. 17, another 2-cock semifinal round on Jan. 19 and a culminating and gruelling four-cock championship finals on Jan. 21. Weight limits for all entries are a minimum of 1.9 kg and maximum 2.5 kg with strictly computerized blind matching for all fights.

All fights of the tournament will be governed by derby rules of the Araneta Coliseum as duly approved by the Gamefowl Division of the Games and Amusement Board.

Sharapova pulls out of Aussie tourney

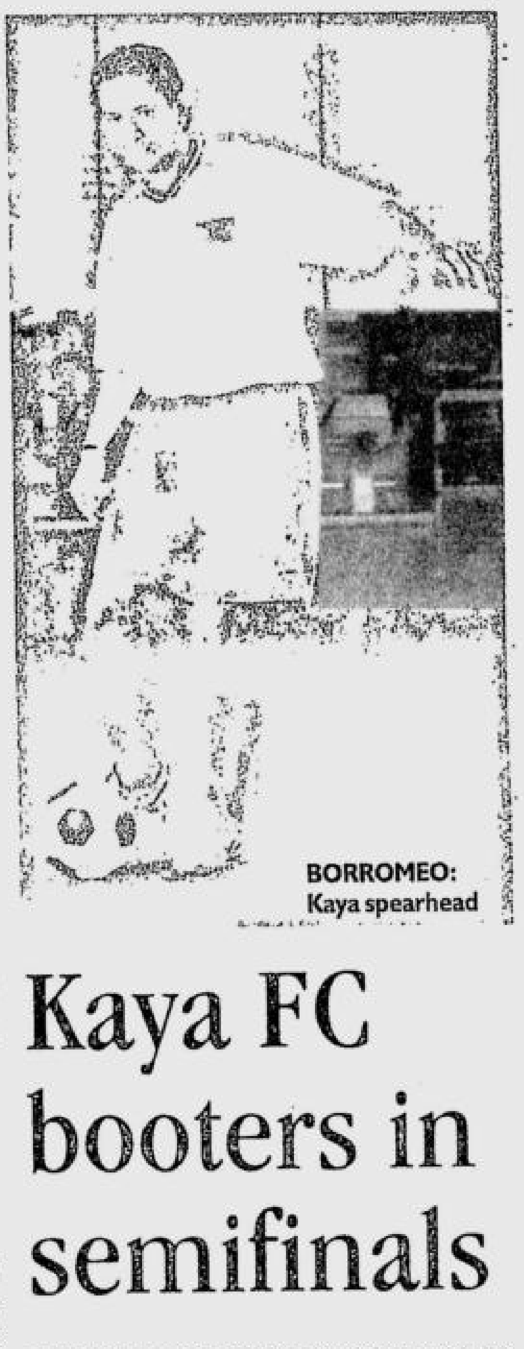
GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA—MARIA SHARAPOVA has pulled out the Australian women's hardcourt tennis tournament at Royal Pines due to a strained right shoulder.

"I am very disappointed to have to withdraw because my right shoulder is not yet ready to allow me to compete at the tour level," Sharapova said in a statement Saturday.

"I hope to be able to play (there) in 2007, and will be doing everything possible in consultation with my doctors to be healthy enough to play the Australian Open (in January)."

Sharapova, 18, suffered the injury in the second half of this season after she became the first Russian-born female to reach the top ranking. She reached at least the quarterfinals at all 15 events she played, losing to the eventual champion at all four majors this year.

The Royal Pines event will mark the return from retirement of former world No. 1 Martina Hingis, who also plans to play in a Sydney tournament the following week, and the Australian Open on a wild card beginning Jan. 16. *AP*



BORROMEO: Kaya spearhead

Kaya FC booters in semifinals

LED BY PHILIPPINE TEAM CAPTAIN ALY BORromeo, Kaya FC advanced to the semifinals of the Philippine Sports Commission-sponsored Sports for Peace Football League recently.

Kaya joined three military squads—Philippine Navy, Air Force and Army—in the semis which will be played early next month.

The semifinal cats pits Navy against Kaya FC and Air Force against Army.

Kaya has managed to squeeze into the final four despite injuries to former national players Freddie Gonzales and Chris Lozano and the departure of defenders Anton del Rosario and Dave Fedigero to study and work in the United States and Thailand, respectively.

Other Kaya standouts are DLSU midfielder Selu Lozano and Fil-Am player Ed Mallari.

Kaya coach Hans Smit is confident that his players will be healthy by the time the semifinal matches come.

Christmas story

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A FRIEND OF MINE WHOM I NOW OCcasionally see has sent me a check.

"The check is for that hero you wrote about in your column a while back," he said through a text message. "It is my own, humble way of making someone happy this Christmas."

The hero won a running event some three decades back but he has yet to receive in full his promised prize.

My friend, he with the softest of hearts, was so moved he wanted to play Santa to our forgotten hero, now a grandfather, but who still lives in abject want (So, what else is new?). Our hero, who will remain anonymous for obvious reasons, is just one of the many heroes not given their due by this decrepit society. Luisito Espinosa is also just one from the long list of sports heroes treated like doormats by our so-called leaders.

"The ghost of poverty always haunts me so that each time I hear or read about one deprived of what's due him, I die a little," said my friend, who sent our hero a check for 20 thousand pesos. Pay to cash.

As I was saying, I rarely see him now but I treat him as a friend. Always, it will be that way. The same goes with him, I believe.

Absence, not to mention distance, can't dissolve a friendship.

I guess it was Robert Jaworski who said that whether near or far, a friend is a friend is a friend. And whether you see him often or not, a friend is a friend is a friend.

This friend of mine, we saw each other very often in the Seventies. Events have overtaken our lives—he became not only very famous but very rich, too. Neither one of the two, I don't have. But that's no reason to fret. You can always be happy with what you have; at times, it's better to be living simply than lavishly. Three square meals a day, plus some beer money and movie fare are more than enough to carry me through each year.

But this friend of mine, you have to give it to him.

He worked real hard and his perseverance produced dividends that can carry him, perhaps, to five lifetimes.

Paul McCartney, the handsome Beatle, when asked in the early years of The Beatles what would he want to savor most when The Beatles finally hit the big time, answered: "Fame and fortune."

Like my friend being cited here, Paul McCartney has them both.

But unlike my friend, Paul McCartney's wealth can carry him to, perhaps, 10 lifetimes, maybe even more.

But the good thing about my friend—and the same can be said, too, of Paul McCartney—is fame has not made him a swell head. Not even his fortune.

I told my friend I need a personal note from him addressed to the forgotten hero, the recipient of his kindness.

"He may yet frame your letter and have it hung on the wall for the world to see," I told him.

"No need," he said. "I don't even want you mentioning my name to him, please? The thought that I had helped one is enough as it gives me this heavenly feeling that I had helped make the universe a better and beautiful place to live in."

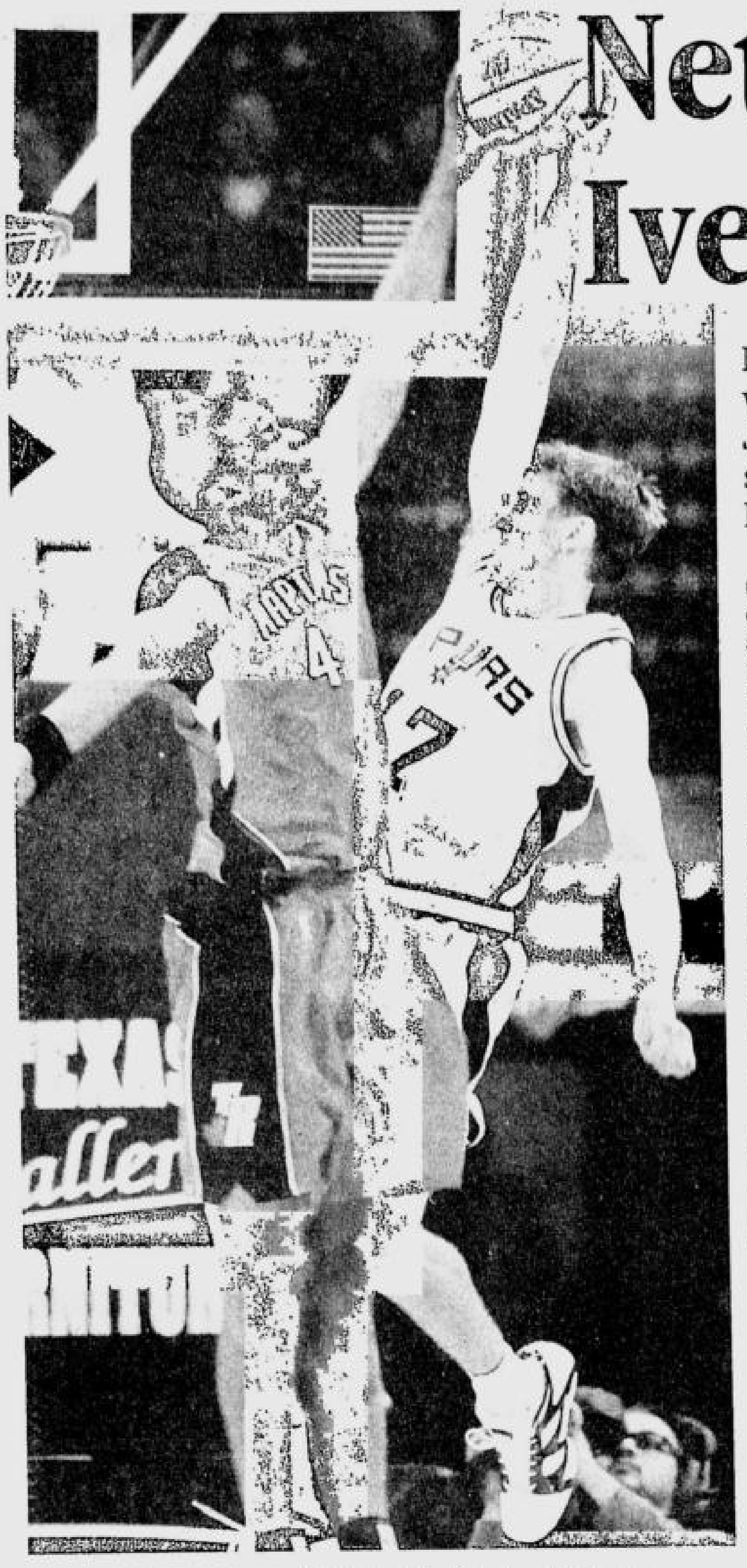
Are we all like my friend?

Merry Christmas!

***

Send comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

Nets post 5th straight win; Iverson's 53 go for naught



TORONTO Raptors forward Chris Bosh (left) blocks a shot by San Antonio Spurs guard Brent Barry during the second half of their NBA game in San Antonio, Texas. The Spurs won, 95-90. REUTERS

MIAMI—VINCE CARTER TIED A CAREER HIGH with 51 points, 37 in the second half, and the New Jersey Nets extended their season-high winning streak to five games with a 95-88 victory over the Miami Heat in the NBA on Friday.

Carter had 19 points in the third, then 18 more in the fourth—including 12 straight free throws to seal the win. Jason Kidd added 12 points for the Nets, who beat Miami for the first time in 11 meetings, including a four-game sweep in last season's playoffs.

"Basically, one guy beat us... Vince was unbelievable," Heat coach Pat Riley said.

Shaquille O'Neal had 24 points and 14 rebounds, and Dwyane Wade added 17 points—on only 4-for-20 shooting—for Miami, which hosts the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday in a much-anticipated Christmas matchup.

Carter drew inspiration from all the Heat-Lakers hype.

"All day I've been watching TV and they were mentioning the Christmas Day game without mentioning they had a game tonight, or to watch the Nets," said Carter, whose team leapfrogged Philadelphia and took a half-game lead in the Atlantic Division. "We're just trying to earn respect."

Carter's averaging 35.4 points on 49 percent shooting during the Nets' winning streak. His 23 free throws were a team record and also a career high, one more than his previous best.

At Atlanta, Allen Iverson scored 53 points, the fifth-highest total of his career, but Joe Johnson had 24 to lead Atlanta over Philadelphia.

Zaza Pachulia added 23 points, including the go-ahead free throws, and Al Harrington scored 22 for Atlanta, which won for the fifth time in six games.

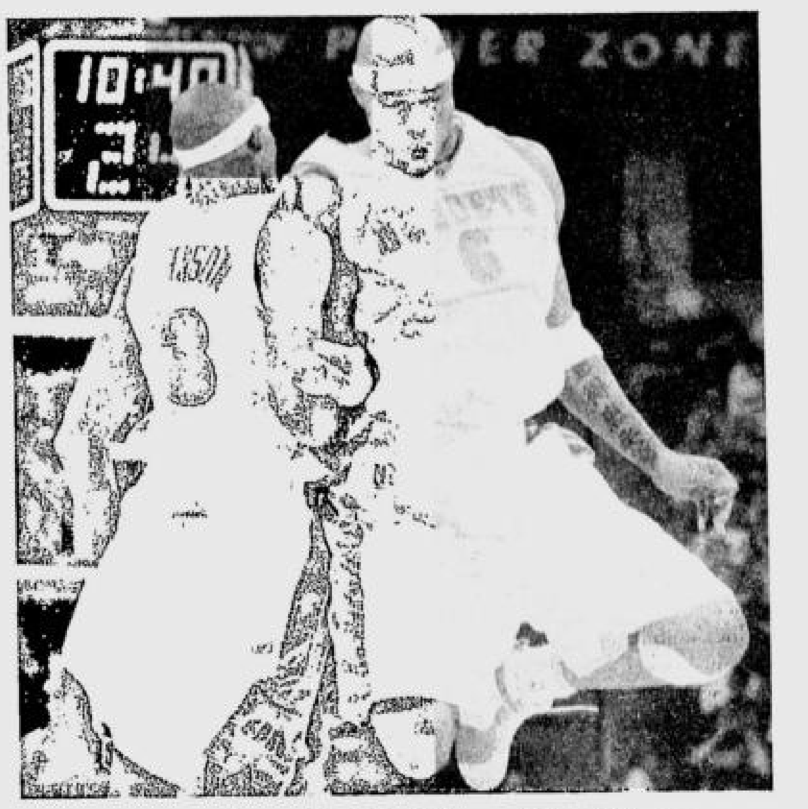
Iverson, who entered with a league-best 33.5 scoring average, had 21 points and six rebounds in the first half. He shot 17-of-31 and hit 19 of 21 free throws, the last coming on a three-point play that cut the Atlanta lead to 101-100 with 5:20 remaining.

He broke the record that Shareef Abdur-Rahim set at 7-year-old Philips Arena with a 50-point performance against Detroit on Nov. 23, 2001. Iverson has scored 50 in nine games, including a career-best 60-point effort in a 112-99 win over Orlando last Feb. 12.

At Orlando, Florida, Kobe Bryant had 21 points and nine assists, and Chris Mihm scored 20 points to lead Los Angeles over Orlando.

In his first game since scoring a career-high 62 points against Dallas on Tuesday, Bryant was 6-of-16 from the field. Lamar Odom had 18 points, six assists and eight rebounds, and Smush Parker added 16 points, five assists and five rebounds for Los Angeles.

Orlando played all but the first few minutes without forward Dwight Howard, who limped into the locker room 2:42 into the first quarter with a sprained right ankle. Steve Francis led Orlando with 28 points and nine assists. Grant Hill had 13 points and eight rebounds, and DeShawn Stevenson had 11 points and eight rebounds.



DENVER Nuggets forward DerMarr Johnson, left, and Kenyon Martin celebrate. AP

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Elton Brand had 38 points and 20 rebounds as Los Angeles pounded its way to a victory over undermanned Charlotte.

Chris Kaman added 22 points and a career-high 22 rebounds for the Clippers, who snapped a five-game road losing streak by exploiting Charlotte's shortage of big men.

The Bobcats came into the game as winners of three of their last four despite a depleted roster. It caught up to them against the Clippers, when the absence of Emeka Okafor (ankle), Sean May (knee) and center Jake Voskuhl (ankle) left them unable to compete under the basket. *AP*

Complete results

LA Lakers 104, Orlando 88; Atlanta 111, Philadelphia 108; LA Clippers 97, Charlotte 88; New Jersey 95, Miami 88; NY Knicks 98, Utah 90; Memphis 95, Chicago 77; Detroit 97, Golden State 85; Cleveland 94, Indiana 89; Portland 91, Minnesota 83; Milwaukee 101, N.O./ Oklahoma City 94; San Antonio 95, Toronto 90; Denver 108, Houston 86; Washington 112, Phoenix 111

Jones, Hopkins agree to return bout March 11

LOS ANGELES—THE ANTICIPAted rematch between former world champions Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins is apparently going to take place March 11 in a site to be determined.

"Everybody reviewed what was on the table and we were able to agree to it," Jones' adviser Brad Jacobs told ESPN.com.

Jones (49-4, 38 KOs) won a unanimous decision against Hopkins (46-4-1, 32 KOs) for the middleweight title in 1993.

No one expected the wait to be more than 12 years for a rematch, which could serve as a farewell fight for both.

"Bernard is very happy about it and so is Roy," Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy Promotions told ESPN.com.

"The way we look at it is that it really is the final chapter. I think both guys are tremendous legends, and each one wants to end his career with a win."

Schaefer said there is interest from venues in Atlanta, Memphis, Chicago and Washington, where the 1993 fight was held.

Jones, who turns 37 in January, is a former middleweight, super middleweight, light heavyweight and heavyweight champion.

JONES

For a decade, he was considered the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, but has declined recently, losing three consecutive fights.

In his last fight on Oct. 1, Jones lost a decision to light heavyweight Antonio Tarver.

Hopkins, who turns 41 in January, bounced back from his loss to Jones and eventually claimed the middleweight title.

He held the crown for more than a decade, making 20 successful defenses, including knockout wins against Felix Trinidad and Oscar De la Hoya, until losing two close decisions to Jermain Taylor, the last coming on Dec. 3. *AFP*

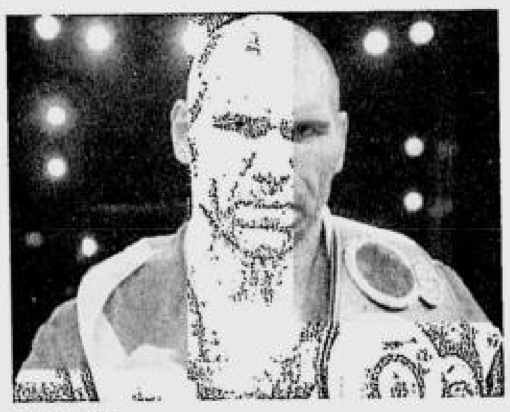
I'm a poet not a beast, says 7-foot champ

LONDON—NEWLY CROWNED WORLD heavyweight champion Nikolay Valuev maybe 7 feet (2.13m) tall and weigh 24 stone (147kg) but he insisted on Saturday that he's a big softy at heart.

"I'm really not a beast," said the Russian fighter. "I'm a very calm person. I even used to write poetry."

Valuev took John Ruiz's WBA heavyweight world title on points in a controversial fight in Berlin last weekend.

But the man dubbed the 'Beast from the East' has shrugged off the row and has been feted as a hero back in his native St Petersburg.



VALUEV

"What I like about boxing is the feeling of danger, all that adrenalin. I don't get enough of it in my normal life."

Everyone in Russia wants to see the champion and the belt.

But there's one problem.

"I don't have it," Valuev told the BBC.

"It wasn't big enough—it didn't fit round my waist. They're having to make me a larger one."

Valuev, the first Russian heavyweight world champion, as well as the tallest and heaviest, now wants to inspire more and more youngsters in the country to take up the sport.

The Nikolay Valuev Boxing School will take in street kids, young drug addicts and other underprivileged children, he said. *AFP*

It's great to be a Yankee—Damon

BRONX, NEW YORK—JOHNNY DAMON WAS officially introduced as a member of Major League Baseball's most storied franchise, the New York Yankees on Friday.

The Yankees agreed to terms with the All-Star center fielder on a four-year, $52 million contract on Tuesday.

"It's great to be a Yankee," said Damon.

"The Yankees stepped up to the forefront and really made me feel wanted."

Damon, 32, passed a physical on Thursday before cutting his trademark long hair and beard to adhere to the Yankees' "personal appearance" policy.

His former "caveman" appearance and emergence as one of baseball's best leadoff hitters made him one of the most popular players in the history of the Boston Red Sox.

Damon spent the last four seasons with the Red Sox, helping them rally from a 3-0 deficit to beat the Yankees in the 2004 American League Championship Series en route to their first World Series title in 86 years.

However, now Damon will also be remembered in Boston for jumping ship to their most bitter enemy. Damon continued the line of prominent players who have moved from the Red Sox to the Yankees.

It began with Babe Ruth over 85 years ago and has continued more recently with Wade Boggs, Roger Clemens and Damon.

The Red Sox offered Damon a four-year deal worth $40 million, falling far short of New York's deal.

"They (the Red Sox) opened my eyes with that offer one month after the season," Damon said. "These guys (the Yankees) tried a lot harder to sign me." Damon also confirmed that another team offered him more years and more money than the Yankees, but would not reveal which club made that offer.

"There was a mystery team out there that offered more years and more money," Damon said. "But they couldn't guarantee winning like the Yankees could."

Damon is a natural fit for the Yankees, who were desperate for a center fielder, where they tried several options last season to no avail. *AFP*

JOHNNY Damon, minus his trademark long hair and beard, tries on his new uniform. AFP

WORLD BASEBALL

Castro says Bush a 'fool' to keep Cuba out of Classic

HAVANA—FIDEL CASTRO SAID the government of US President George W. Bush was wrong to prevent Cuba from playing in next year's World Baseball Classic.

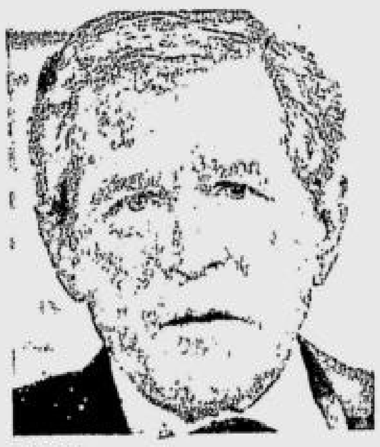
"He is very much a fool," the Cuban president said of Bush on Friday. "He doesn't know who the Cuban baseball players are, or that they are Olympic and world champions. If he knew, he would know something about this country's government."

Castro mentioned the ongoing dispute during the second day of regular sessions of the island's National Assembly.

The US Treasury Department last week rejected the application for Cuba to play in the 16-team tournament scheduled for March 3-20, evidently because of concerns that Castro's government could enjoy financial gain by participating.

Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association, which are organizing the tournament, reapplied Thursday to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. OFAC's permission is required under US laws and regulations governing transactions with Cuba, which has been under an American trade and financial embargo for more than four decades.

CASTRO



BUSH

In an attempt to eliminate a major concern of the US government, the Cuban Baseball Federation announced on Thursday that any money gained by the national team would be donated to Hurricane Katrina victims.

Cuban baseball "would be willing for the money associated with participation in the classic to go to those displaced by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans," said the statement read on state television by baseball federation president Carlos Rodriguez.

Cuba is scheduled to play first-round games in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and would remain in San Juan if it advances to the second round.

Antonio Muñoz, a businessman who agreed to pay millions of dollars to bring the games to Puerto Rico, thinks the Treasury Department will reverse its decision.

"All efforts are being made to get Cuba to come and participate and I think we will succeed," Muñoz said by telephone from New York. *AP*

YEARENDER

Yes, the Filipino athletes can

RP sports heroes prove worth by giving country first SEAG crown

By Roy Luarca

ONE BY ONE THE GOLD medals piled up. Courtesy of Filipino athletes who delivered to give the Philippines its first ever overall title in the Southeast Asian Games.

One by one the foreign boxers fell. Victims of vicious punches thrown by Boom Boom Bautista, Brian Viloria and Manny Pacquiao in succession.

These were the lasting images that shaped the sporting landscape of the year that's about to end.

The Filipino athlete will finally greet the new year smiling and standing proud after sweeping under a rubble of failures and frustrations engulfing a divided nation.

For 10 days at least, the Filipinos were unified at home as they cheered on the athletes, gyrated to the beat of "Pinoy Ako" and sang the national anthem passionately as golds rushed in during the recent SEAG biennial meet. When the dust cleared, the record golden heap stood at 113, sprinkled with 84 silvers and 94 bronzes.

It was altogether different in September at the Staples Center in California. The images appeared like flashes, less than an hour when compressed, but stayed in memory.

Bautista needed only three rounds to down Colombian Felix Flores Murillo, Viloria less than one to dethrone Mexican Eric Ortiz as World Boxing Council light flyweight king and Pacquiao six to smother veteran Mexican Hector Velasquez and return to universal acclaim.

Never have Filipino boxers shown such devastating power in a single card, which, fortunately, was beamed worldwide. The sight of Viloria, who grew up in the United States, cloaked in a Philippine flag and dedicating his triumph to Filipinos, was truly heart-warming.

Among the SEA Games heroes, swimmer Miguel Molina, diver Shiela Mae Perez and rower Benjie Tolentino stood out as triple-gold medalists.

Other major contributors were golfer Juvic Pagunsan, former world 9-ball pool champion Alex Pagulayan, Fil-Am tennis ace Cecil Mamiit and wushu artist Willy Wang.

Among the single-gold contributors, boxer Harry Tañamor, judoka John Baylon and karateka Gretchen Manalad deserved special mention for standing out in their events.

Long jumper Henry Dagmil and hammer thrower Arniel Ferrera also distinguished themselves with record-breaking efforts in their events.

The joy brought about by the SEAG overall championship brushed aside the charges, though later denied, by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra accusing Filipino sports officials of "cheating" in the Games.

It even made the Filipinos forget about the absence of basketball, regarded as a national passion, in the SEAG calendar. This came about after the international basketball federation suspended the country due to the refusal of the Philippine Olympic Committee to reinstate the Fiba-recognized Basketball Association of the Philippines in its roster of members.

Of course, there are other Filipino athletes who shone outside of the SEAG arena.

Jennifer Rosales, sustaining the fiery form that netted her the Sportswoman of the Year in 2004, enjoyed another banner season in the Ladies Professional Golf Association Tour, winning the inaugural tournament (SBS-Open)in Hawaii, placing second in the Mizuno Classic and shoving her partnership with Dorothy Delasin to second place in the World Cup.

Then there was jungolfer Wolen Superal, who was tagged Superman in the Callaway Junior World Golf Championships in San Diego, California, when he posted a 54-hole aggregate of 21-under-par 201 that shattered the record of compatriot Carito Villaroman made in 1986. The 12-year-old's first round effort of 10-under-par 64 was also a new 18-hole mark.

Mark Paragua finally earned his grandmaster title at 21, the youngest Filipino to do so. The country's top-ranked player also stands to become the first Filipino to break the 2600 Elo barrier when the world chess federation ratings is released next month.

Another chess wizard, Wesley So, tied for first in the 11-12 division of the World Youth Chess Championships held in Paris. At 12, So is the youngest Filipino to be conferred the Fide Master title.

Efren "Bata" Reyes showed that at 50 he isn't over the hill yet, ruling the IPT's King of the Hill Invitational in Orlando, Florida, and pocketing more than P10 million.

Hardcourt action, however, was dominated by Far Eastern University. Spearheaded by back-to-back MVP Arwind Santos, the Tamaraws regained the crown at the expense of the Green Archers.

In the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Letran Knights lived up to hype as they wrested the title from the Philippine Christian University Dolphins.

There were controversies and blot marks, of course.

An eligibility scandal rocked the University Athletic Association of the Philippines after La Salle discovered and publicly admitted that two Green Archers played for La Salle's 2004 champion team using fake credentials to gain college eligibility.

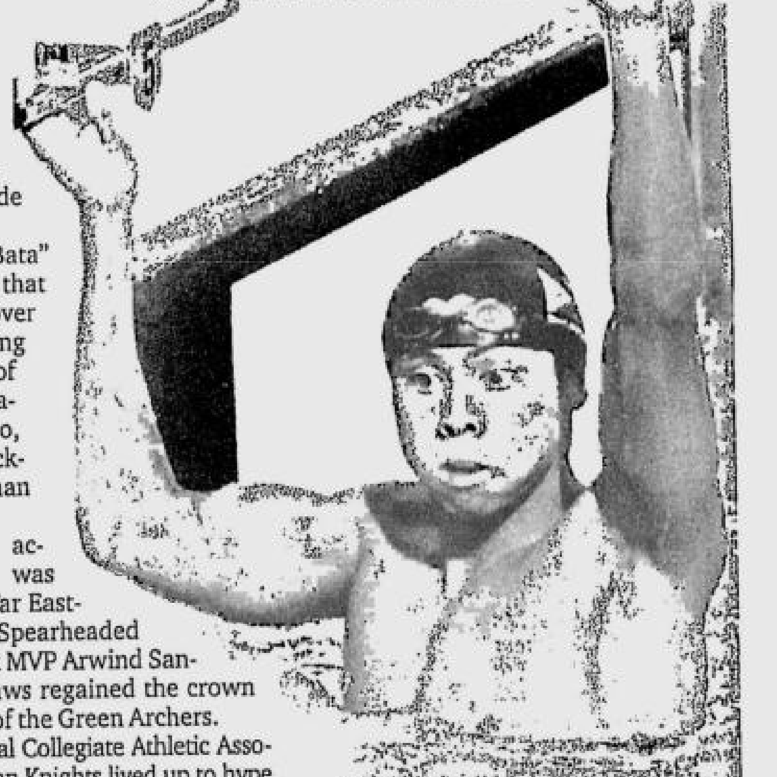
Up to now, DLSU and the UAAP board are conducting separate investigations on the case that exposed flaws in the collegiate admission system.

Even First Gentleman Mike Arroyo's reward of a Hong Kong tour to the SEAG gold medalists caused a howl, some columnists branding the trip as a waste of precious dollars and hitting Mr. Arroyo for not patronizing local tourist destinations.

Overall, however, 2005 can be deemed as phenomenal for the Filipino athlete. It showed the triumph of gallant heart and fighting spirit over adversities.

TRACE COLLEGE
TRACE COLLEGE
NES 2005

SHIELA MAE Perez (left) and Ceceil Domenios gave the Philippines its first SEAG gold. EDWIN BACASMAS



WITH three gold medals, Miguel Molina also shone for the country. EDWIN BACASMAS

Up next for boxers: Olympic gold

AFTER WRESTING THE REGIONAL supremacy from Thailand, the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) has announced it's again going all-out to win the country's first Olympic gold medal.

"Mission accomplished," said Abap president Manny Lopez after both his male and female charges culminated their efforts with the boxing championship in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

The country won eight gold medals, four each in the men's and women's category, to beat Thailand, which finished with six golds, in the battle for the boxing crown in the SEA Games.

Victory was made sweeter by the fact that the Thais came in full force, sending a powerhouse team that included world and Olympic champions in a determined bid to extend their domination.

However, regaining the SEA Games diadem was just the start of a renewed drive for Philippine amateur boxing.

"The Olympic gold in its mind, Abap promises to ride on the momentum of its SEAG success," said Lopez.

Actually, Lopez said, Abap received much lower subsidies compared with other national sports associations.

"But I'm not complaining. I've always stressed that an NSA must find ways to fund itself and not rely too much on government support," Lopez said. "This is the reason why sponsors from the private sector like Touch Mobile and Pacific Heights responded to our appeal," said Lopez.

The foreign trips of the Abap boxers were big expeditions but Lopez, secretary general of Federation of Asian Amateur Boxing and also a senior member of the powerful Technical and Rules Committee of the ruling International Amateur Boxing Association, said these stints abroad used minimal help from the government.

Light Flyweight Harry Tañamor remains the country's biggest draw while lightweight and two-time Asian champion Mitchel Martinez has increased consciousness on women's boxing.

The Abap unveiled two future world beaters—bantamweight Joan Tipon and lightweight Genebert Basadre—who have the skills and built to shine come the 2006 Doha, Qatar, Asian Games and the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Espiritu spearheads Langkawi-bound cyclists

THE PAGCOR CASINO FILIPINO CYCLING TEAM vows to regain the top ranking in the region when it gets the chance to compete in the TM Le Tour de Langkawi from Feb. 3 to 12, 2006 in Malaysia.

The 10-man team, headed by 2004 Tour Pilipinas champion Rhyan Tanguilig and former Asian king Victor Espiritu, is in the thick of preparations for the keenly awaited event, raring to showcase their wares against the best in Asia and other continents after missing the action early this year.

"With the talent that we have, we are confident to dish out a solid campaign in the event," said RP-Pagcor team manager Ric Rodriguez.

The Philippines used to lord it over the field in Asian cycling with Espiritu emerging the top rider in the region in 1998.

Rodriguez said the team has been doing road works the past two months to build up on stamina and will go into specifics, such as interval training, early next year. The other members of the squad are Lloyd Reynante, Merculio Ramos, Bernardo Luzon, Albert Primero, Orly Villanueva, Ronald Gorantes, Sherwin Diamsay and Sherwin Carrera.

The team was recently invited by Tour de Langkawi managing director Simon Donnellan to join the event where the Pagcor-sponsored Filipino riders are expected to match riding skills with those from Japan, Iran and Malaysia, among others.

PAGCOR squad: All raring to conquer Langkawi field.

SEA Games sweep gives dragonboat a big boost

RP DRAGONBOAT TEAM MEMBER USMAN Anteroal hopes the six-gold-medal sweep in the recent 23rd Southeast Asian Games would attract more Filipinos and even commercial sponsors in the long run for more honors in the coming years.

"It's a big thing to win six golds because that was really our target," said Anterola, an Army Corporal, in Filipino.

Anterola hopes the victory—and his appearance in an energy drink commercial—would help draw interest in the sport also known as traditional boat race, which traces its roots in China.

The 28-year-old Anterola was a former javelin and shotput from the University of Perpetual Help-Rizal who shifted to rowing in 1998. He was part of the gold medal wins of the Philippines in the 1000m 20-a side, 500m 20-a side and 500 10-a side events.

He was part of the national team which competed in the 2005 International Dragon Boat Competition. The team won eight gold medals and one silver medal.

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NTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

GRETCHEN Barretto sends herself gifts.

Christmas!

THERE ARE Christ-"MUST" traditions that we just never outgrow. They are what put us in a holiday mood, no matter our state of hearts or pockets. We asked some celebrities about their cherished rituals, and what Christmas presents they are giving themselves.

It turns out that, when Christmas comes around, most celebrities get down on their knees and pay homage to the real Star of the season. May His Star shine brightly on you and twinkle even long after Christmas is over! *Joyeux Noel tout le monde!*

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

MARTIN NIEVERA

- Giving is the heart of Christmas. Not just materially. That's one tradition I observe with gusto. My gift to myself is spending time with my family. And my gift to my little girl Pipay.... it's a gift that won't fit under a tree, a gift that can only come from me. A gift that no other man can buy. This is a gift that once made us cry. This is a gift that stands alone. This is a

MARTIN has unique gift for Pipay.

STARRY/ A2-2

31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

VINCENT CABREZA

(Inquirer Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival opens today.)

"Terrorist Hunter"

Stars Eddie Garcia, Dennis Roldan, Lito Legaspi, Maricar de Mesa, Bob Soler, Ramon Christopher, Ronald Gan Ledesma
Directed by Val Iglesias

BEFORE his arrest following his alleged involvement in the kidnapping of a Chinese-Filipino child, actor-politician Roldan played Malic, a terrorist-kidnapper in an action flick topbilled by Garcia and directed by veteran character actor Iglesias.

In this slugfest, Garcia is Capt. Samson, head of the Suicide Force, a special tactics military unit that tackles seemingly impossible cases.

The soldiers get their toughest assignment yet when the daughter (De Mesa) of their boss, Gen. Cruz (Legaspi), is kidnapped by Malic, head of "an international kidnap-for-ransom gang that uses human bombs in killing diplomats."

Garcia, a dependable hitmaker, asserts that this film is his "biggest" MMFF action-drama flick since 2000's "Deathrow."

Seems the MMFF screening committee agreed with him. Originally slated for the second batch of entries (which opens Jan. 1), "Terrorist Hunter" scored the highest number of votes meriting it a slot in the first batch of films (which starts screening today).

Produced by industry newcomer Double Impact Films, "Terrorist Hunter," according to its drumbeaters, is "as timely as today's headlines." *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

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4: Shake, Rattle & Roll	2: Enteng Kabisote II	2: Rental Reservation
5: Ako, Legal Wife	3: Terrorists Hunter	
	4: Shake, Rattle & Roll	

DOLBY DIGITAL

Everyday Family Day at StarMallsII

Have a night out with us as LIVE BANDS perform every Thursdays & Fridays at Metropolis Alabang.
Latin & RnB Grooves, Great Food at Cuba Libre BAR Starmall Edsa 2nd Level
Sing your best at our new KTV rooms at Mark's KTV & Bar at the 2nd Level of Metropolis Star Alabang

Real Twister Goodness in tetra pack!

Also available in Lychee-Apple flavor

There's a whole new twist to Tropicana Twister! Now it comes in Tetra packs that make it easier for you to enjoy its naturally refreshing goodness anytime, anywhere! From Tropicana, the world's number 1 orange juice brand!

*Source: International Beverage Research Ranking on Juice Brands 2004

Tropicana Twister

Naturally refreshing. Anytime, anywhere.

Starry, starry...

From page A2-1

gift as solid as our home. This is a gift I can give no other, not a friend or partner, not even a lover. This is a gift that's priceless and so true. This is a gift that came from God up above. A silent prayer and unconditional love to the mother of my children!

GRETCHEN BARRETTO

We have mass at 6 p.m. and don't wait for midnight before we eat. I particularly enjoy various kinds of cheese. It's a happy reunion of friends but, by 10 p.m. they start going home to their families. I have this funny habit of ordering little things for myself like books and plates. I ask the store to wrap them and have them delivered to our house. I get a kick out of opening my gifts to myself with a dedication that says "To Gretchen, From Gretchen." Tonyboy gets a good laugh every time. We all have to love ourselves first, right? Only then can we begin to spread love on Christmas, or any day for that matter.

PIA Guanio takes a break.

JANICE DE BELEN

Since I converted to Iglesia ni Kristo two years ago, I have stopped celebrating Christmas the way I used to—except we still have Noche Buena and gift-giving, traditions that my kids grew up with. I'm not obliging them to convert; when they begin to seek, then it would be their choice. My kids' happiness is what Christmas is all about for me.

IVAN MAYRINA

Mixing *halaya ube* with my dad on Christmas Eve is something I never fail to do. It's tough work, but Christmas won't be complete without it. I'm getting myself a Yamaha FZX 750. It more than satiates my need for speed!

PIA GUANIO

I love opening gifts with the family on Christmas morning. They have never been the type to stay up late, so our big celebration is right on the 25th. We have a huge breakfast and a feast for lunch. I'm treating myself to a few days off from work.

FRANCIS: Family first

FRANCIS MAGALONA

Noche Buena with my wife and kids and Christmas Day lunch with my brothers, sisters and in-laws is something I look forward to. I'm buying myself an Xbox 360 for Christmas.

SUNSHINE: House arrest

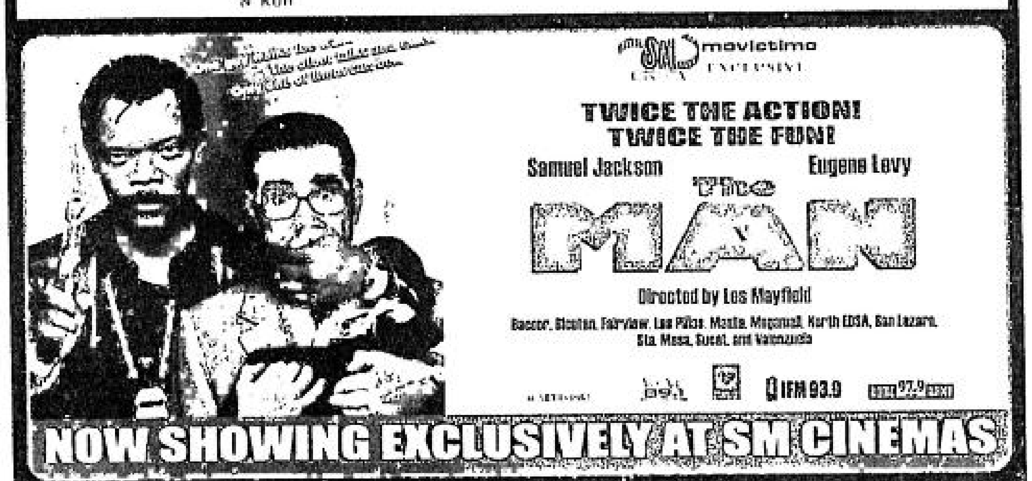
SUNSHINE CRUZ

I got myself a pair of earrings which I will wear when I start to go out again. After giving birth I've been under house arrest.

STARRY/ A2-4

FROM ACADEMY AWARD WINNING DIRECTOR
PETER JACKSON
KING KONG
IN THEATERS WORLDWIDE DECEMBER 14

Ako Legal Wife
Shake, Rattle & Roll
Kutob
Enteng Kabisote 2
Exodus
Mulawin



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movietime SCHEDULE AND EVENTS
METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL
Ako Legal Wife · Shake, Rattle & Roll · Kutob · Enteng Kabisote 2 · Exodus · Mulawin

SM movietime EXCLUSIVE
TWICE THE ACTION!
TWICE THE FUN!
Samuel Jackson Eugene Levy
The MAN
Directed by Les Mayfield
Bacoor, Bicutan, Fairview, Las Piñas, Manila, Megamall, North EDSA, San Lazaro, Sta. Mesa, Sucat, and Valenzuela
NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY AT SM CINEMAS

GUARANTEED SEATS

THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 KING KONG
01:10FS/01:40MF
04:50LFS/05:20LMF/08:30END
2 KING KONG
12:15FS/12:40MF
03:50LFS/04:20LMF/07:30END

MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
11:30FS/12:00MF
03:10LFS/03:40LMF/06:50END

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
01:20FS/01:40MF
04:50LFS/05:05LMF/08:15END
2 KING KONG
11:00FS/11:15MF
02:23LFS/02:40LMF/05:55END
3 KING KONG
10:35FS/10:45MF
01:53LFS/02:10LMF/05:20END

MANILA
6 KING KONG
11:30MF/02:55/06:20
09:20LFS/09:45LMF/12:45END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 FAMILY STONE
9 THE FOG
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 THE MAN
12 KING KONG

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 THE FOG

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY TONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 CHICKEN LITTLE
12 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
7 THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 FAMILY STONE
4 MERRY CHRISTMAS
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY MANILA
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 THE MYTH
10 IN HER SHOES
11 THE FOG
12 THE MAN

SM SAN LAZARO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG

LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARI NG SABLAY
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY BACOOR
1 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 THE MYTH

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY ILOILO
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 RESERVED
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 THE FOG
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE MYTH
4 KING KONG

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING, MTRCB RATING, SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED FILM HITS MANILA ON JANUARY 8!
Fist Of A Man.
Heart Of A Woman.
An Ekachai Uekrongtham Film
Beautiful Boxer
based on a true story

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old can only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or guardian

INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED FILM HITS MANILA ON JANUARY 8!

WINNER
GRAND PRIX
Brussels International Film Festival

WINNER
GRAND PRIX
Montreal Image+Nation International Film Festival

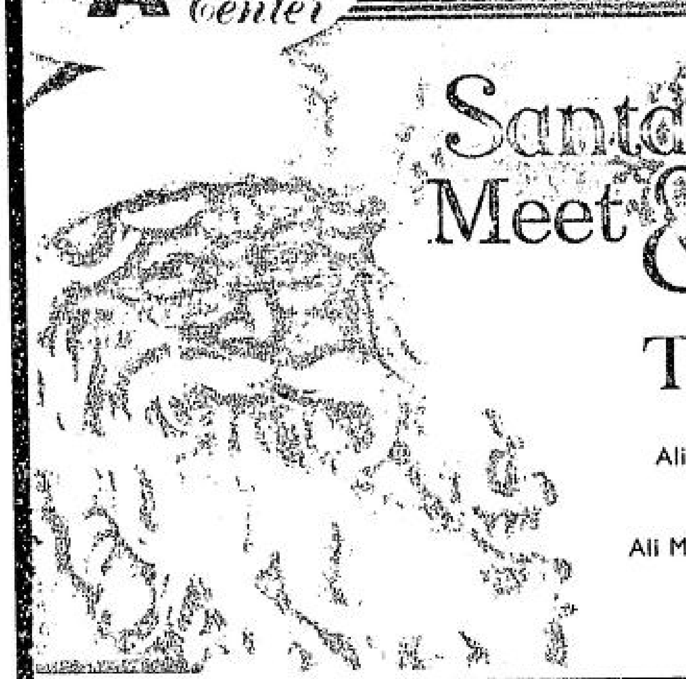
WINNER
BEST FILM
19th Torino Festival Internazionale

WINNER
BEST ACTOR
Supannahongsa Award
Thai Academy Awards

WINNER
JURY PRIZE
Skeive Filmer Norway International Film Festival

WINNER
Gehitu Sebastian Award
San Sebastian International Film Festival

Fist Of A Man. Heart Of A Woman.
An Ekachai Uekrongtham Film
Beautiful Boxer
based on a true story
VIVA www.viva.com.ph www.beautifulboxer.com


Araneta Center Leisure Guide

Santa Claus Meet & Greet

TODAY
3:00 - 4:30 pm
Ali Mall Exchange Lobby

4:30 - 6:00 pm
Ali Mall Lower Ground Floor

3:00 - 6:00 pm
Farmers Plaza

CINEMA SCHEDULES
Gateway CINEPLEX 10
LEVEL 4 GATEWAY MALL
ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555

METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL
MULAWIN 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 11:40 / 2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
AKO, LEGAL WIFE 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
EXODUS 11:00 / 1:10 / 3:20 / 5:30 / 7:40 / 9:50
KUTOB 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
ENTENG KABISOTE 2 10:40 / 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
TERRORIST HUNTER 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:40

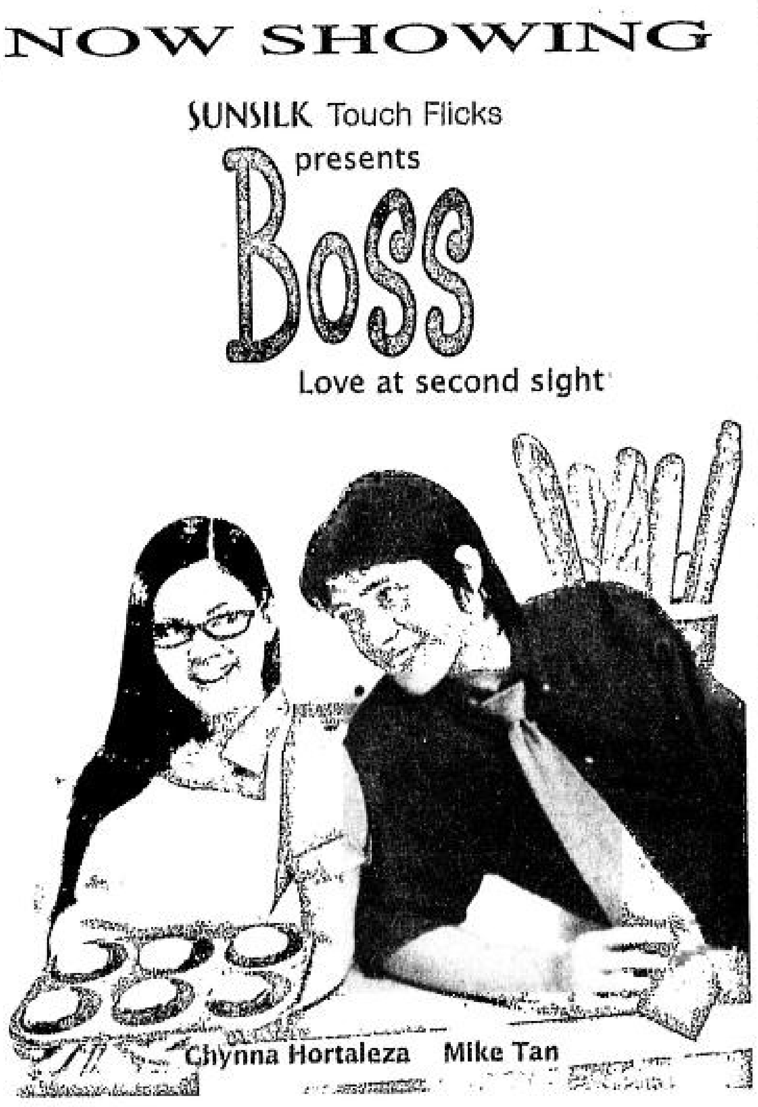
ALI MALL CINEMAS
① KUTOB 11:40 / 2:55 / 4:10 / 6:25 / 8:40
② TERRORIST HUNTER 11:10 / 1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
③ MULAWIN 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05
④ ENTENG KABISOTE 2 11:55 / 2:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
⑤ AKO LEGAL WIFE 11:20 / 1:40 / 4:00 / 6:20 / 8:40
DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

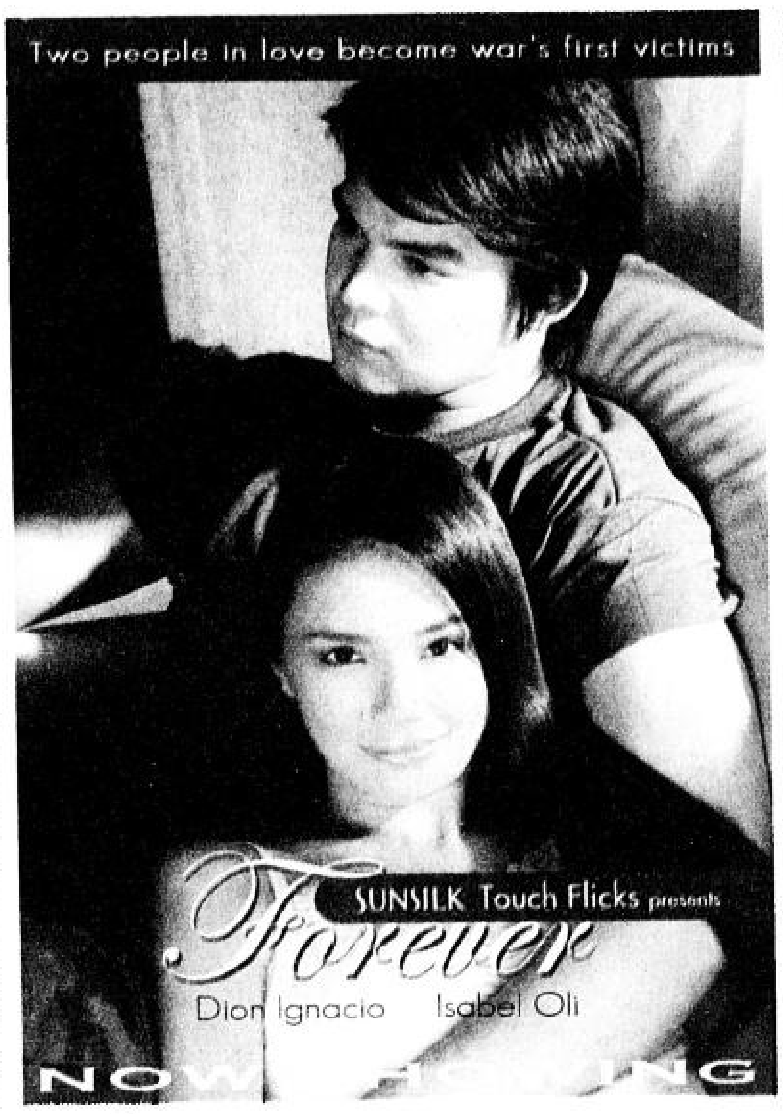
ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS
SPELLBOUND MAGIC SHOW December 25 Sunday Showtime 6 pm
WORLD SLASHER CUP January 17, 19 & 21

CENTER EVENTS
BAZAAR *Everything Christmas Holiday Bazaar* ongoing until January 8 at Level 4 of Gateway Mall
SALE *Araneta Center Year-End Centerwide Sale* from Dec. 26, 2005 to Jan. 1, 2006. Up to 50% off on great selections at Gateway Mall, Farmers Plaza & Ali Mall. Extended mall hours of 10am to 10pm except Dec. 31 & Jan. 1

LOG ON TO www.aranetacenter.net FOR MORE DETAILS OR TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-MAIL ENTERTAINMENT UPDATES

RELAX, SEE A MINI-MOVIE


NOW SHOWING
SUNSILK Touch Flicks
presents
Boss
Love at second sight
Chynna Hortaleza
Mike Tan


Two people in love become war's first victims
SUNSILK Touch Flicks presents
Forever
Dion Ignacio
Isabel Oli
NOW SHOWING

a SUNSILK Touch Flicks presentation
Finding love when you least expect it
UR DJ
Rainier Castillo
Yasmien Kurdi
NOW SHOWING

WATCH THEM ON GMA 7

DAILY:

DURING UNANG HIRIT

AFTER EAT BULAGA

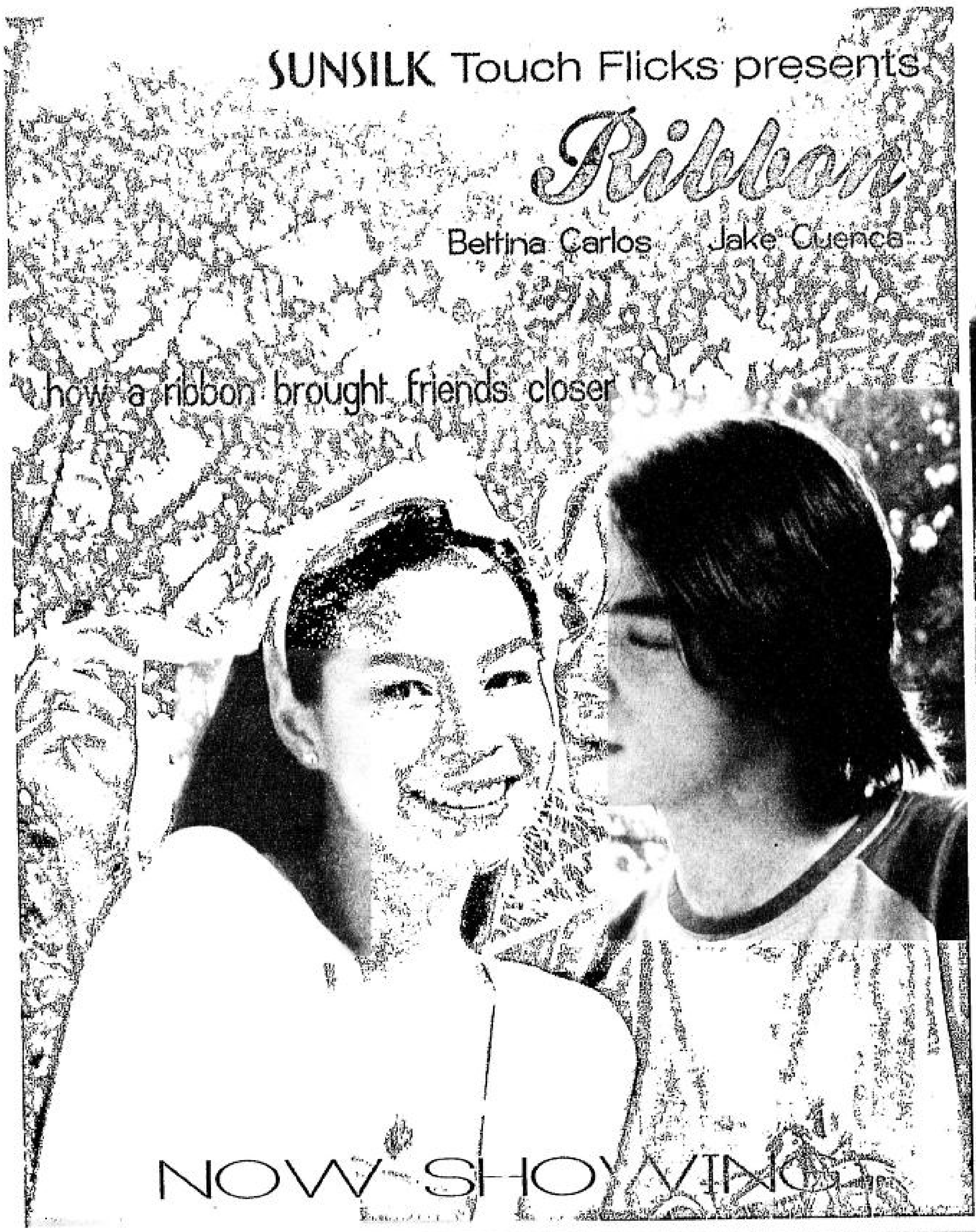
DURING KILI-TV

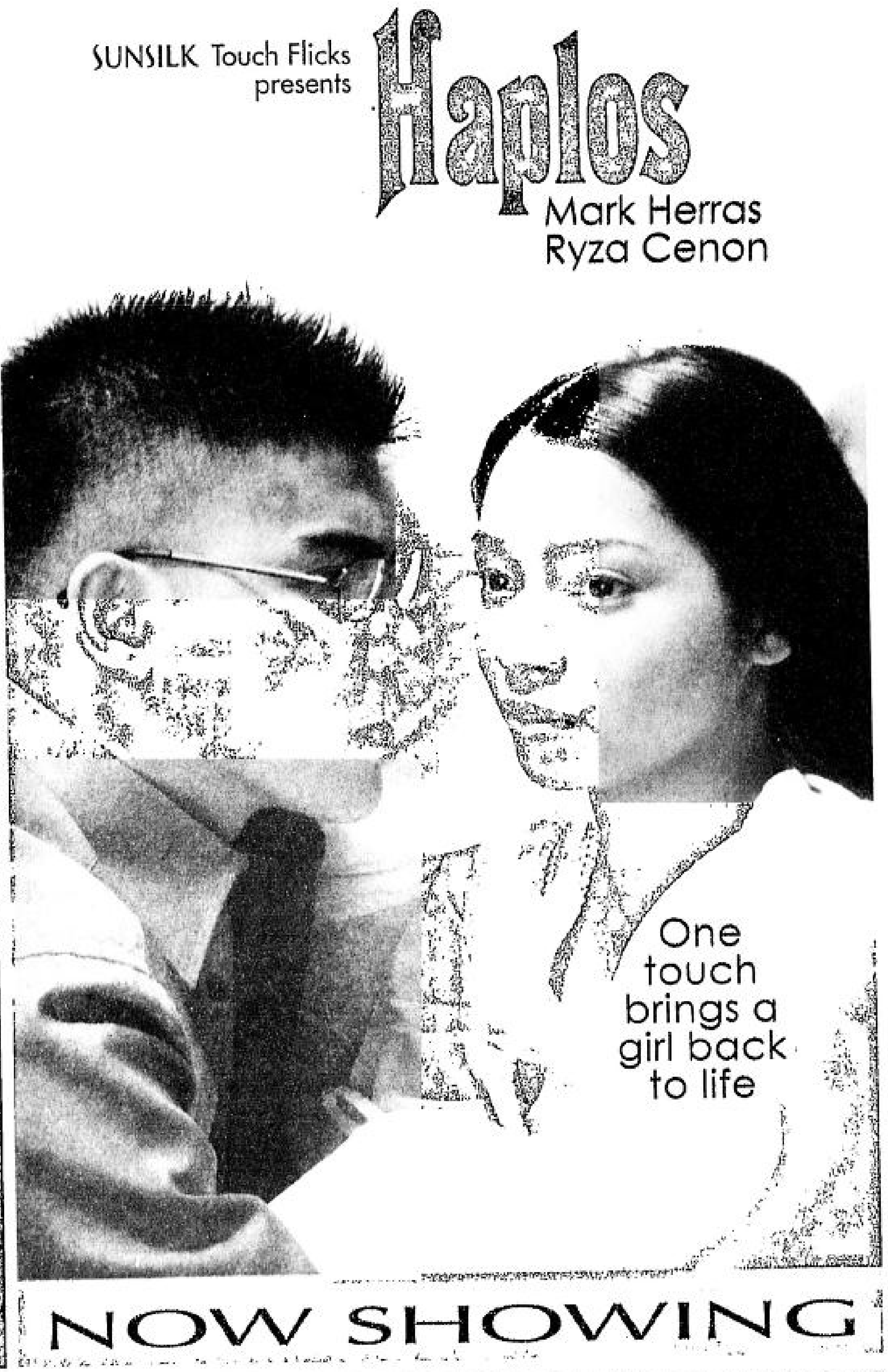
or log on to **www.sunsilk.ph**

CATCH YOUR FAVORITE STARS DURING THE MALL TOUR:

DEC. 21 & 22 - STA. LUCIA MALL

JAN. 10 & 11 - GLORIETTA


SUNSILK Touch Flicks presents
Ribbon
Bettina Carlos
Jake Cuenca
how a ribbon brought friends closer
NOW SHOWING


SUNSILK Touch Flicks
presents
Haplos
Mark Herras
Ryza Cenon
One
touch
brings a
girl back
to life
NOW SHOWING

SUNSILK
TOUCH FLICKS

VOTE FOR YOUR **FAVORITE** MINI-MOVIES AND **GET** THE CHANCE TO **WIN** BIG **PRIZES!**

P500,000.00 • E-LOADS • **SONY** HANDYCAMS • **NOKIA** CAMERA PHONES

TO **VOTE:** TEXT SUNSILK<SPACE>TITLE OF MINI-MOVIE/STICKER CODE AND TEXT TO 2955

EACH TEXT MESSAGE COSTS P2.50 FOR GLOBE AND SMART SUBSCRIBERS AND P2.00 FOR SUN SUBSCRIBERS

PROMO ENDS: JAN 14, 2006

PER DOH-BFAD PERMIT #1101 SERIES OF 2005

SUNSILK
SHAMPOO
SOFT TOUCH

Starry...

From page A2-2

ALBERT: Fresh tree

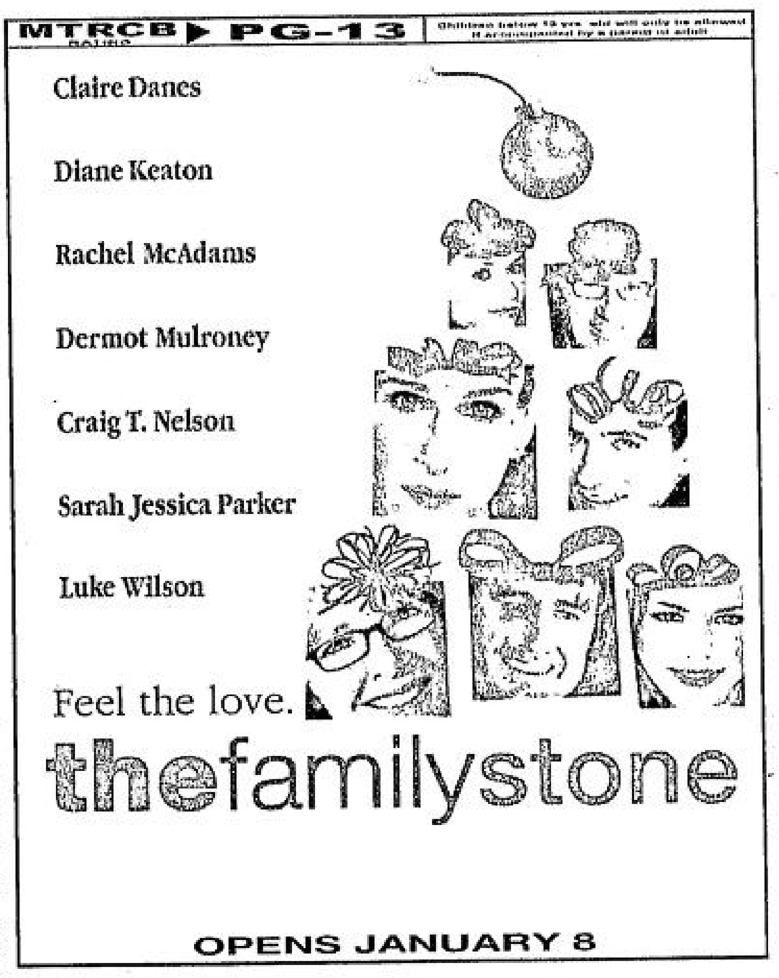
ALBERT MARTINEZ

When we were living in the United States, we used to choose and chop down our own Christmas tree. Unfortunately we don't do that here. Misa de Gallo is what my family and I enjoy as Christmas bonding time.

CHESCA GARCIA

Dressing up for the occasion and savoring my mom's yummy treats is what excites me

STARRY/ A2-5

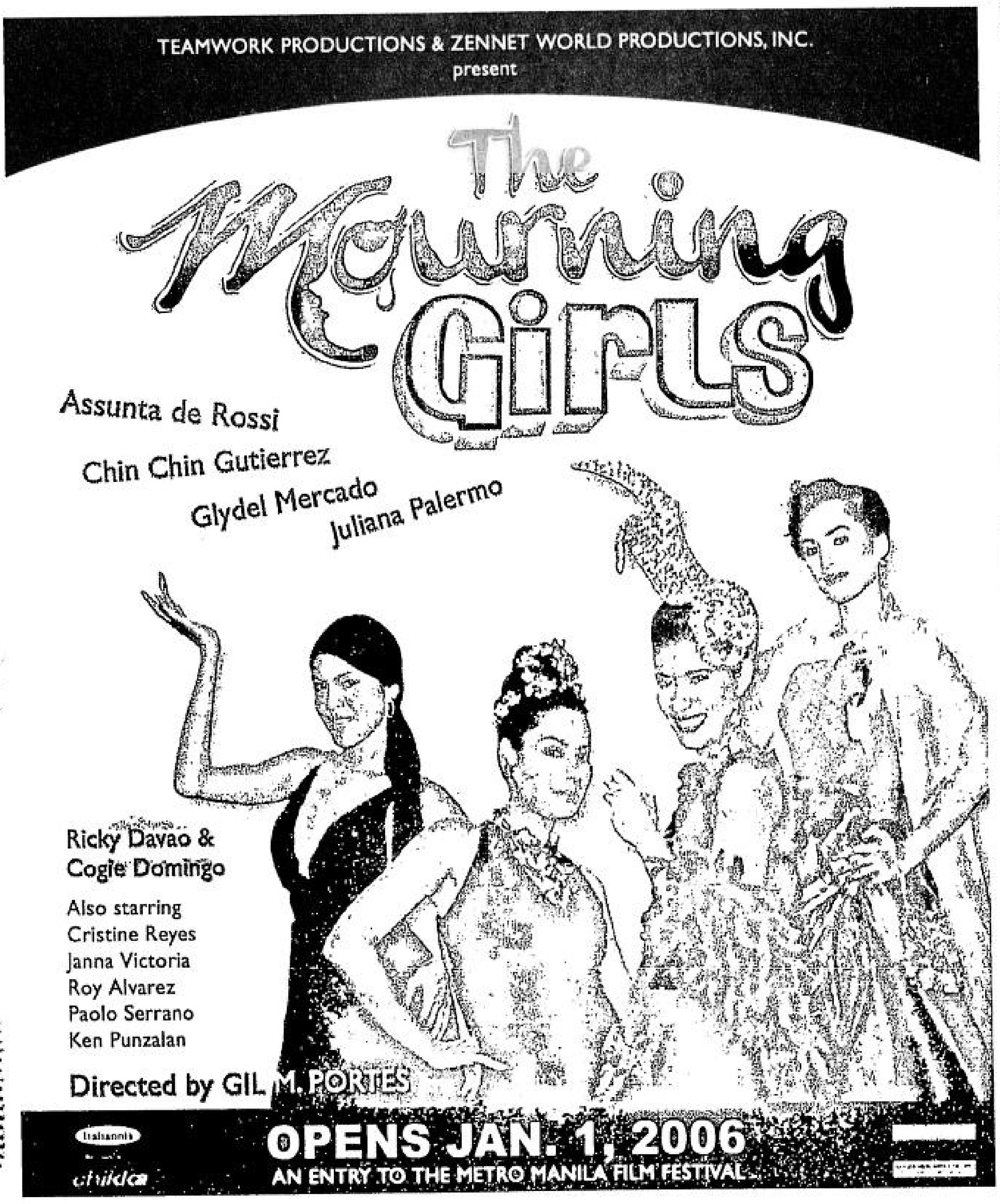


MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

Claire Danes
Diane Keaton
Rachel McAdams
Dermot Mulroney
Craig T. Nelson
Sarah Jessica Parker
Luke Wilson

Feel the love.
thefamilystone

OPENS JANUARY 8



TEAMWORK PRODUCTIONS & ZENNET WORLD PRODUCTIONS, INC.
present

The Mourning Girls

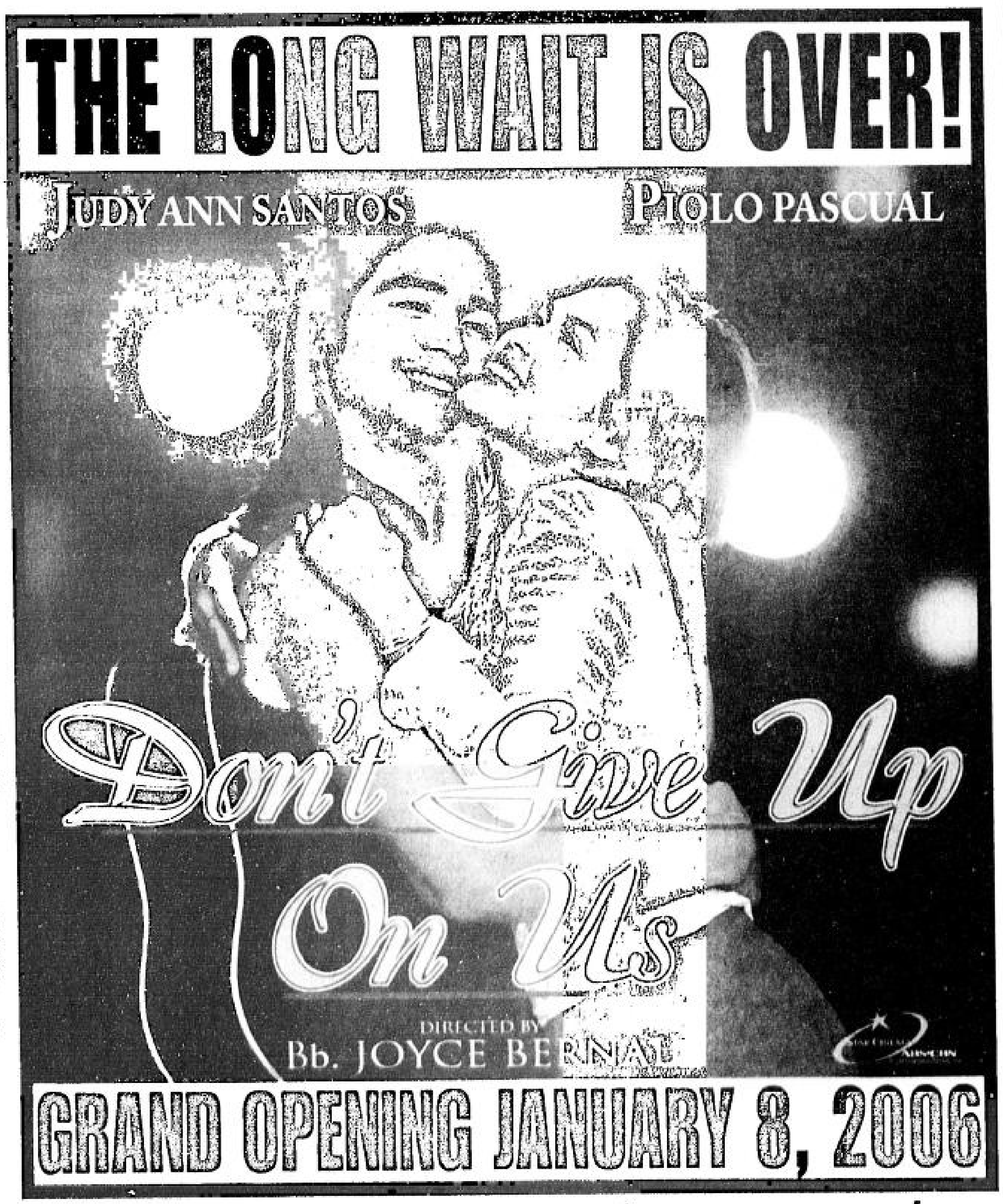
Assunta de Rossi
Chin Chin Gutierrez
Glydel Mercado
Juliana Palermo

Ricky Davao &
Cogie Domingo

Also starring
Cristine Reyes
Janna Victoria
Roy Alvarez
Paolo Serrano
Ken Punzalan

Directed by GIL M. PORTES

OPENS JAN. 1, 2006
AN ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL



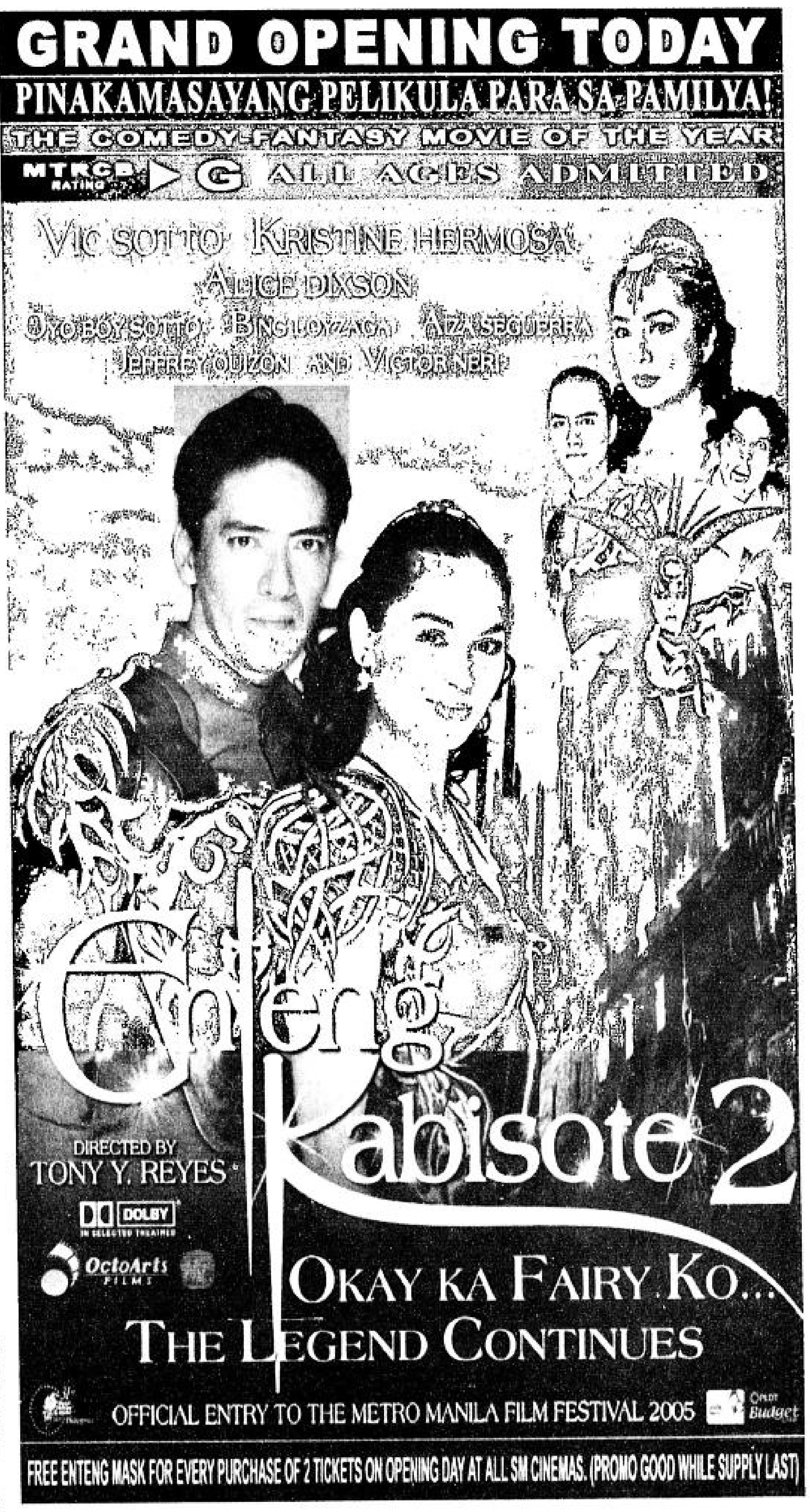
THE LONG WAIT IS OVER!

JUDY ANN SANTOS PIOLO PASCUAL

Don't Give Up On Us

DIRECTED BY
Bb. JOYCE BERNAL

GRAND OPENING JANUARY 8, 2006



GRAND OPENING TODAY
PINAKAMASAYANG PELIKULA PARA SA PAMILYA!
THE COMEDY-FANTASY MOVIE OF THE YEAR
MTRCB RATING ▶ G ALL AGES ADMITTED

VIC SOTTO KRISTINE HERMOSA
ALICE DIXSON
OYO BOY SOTTO BING LOYZAGA AIZA SEGUERRA
JEFFREY QUIZON AND VICTOR NERI

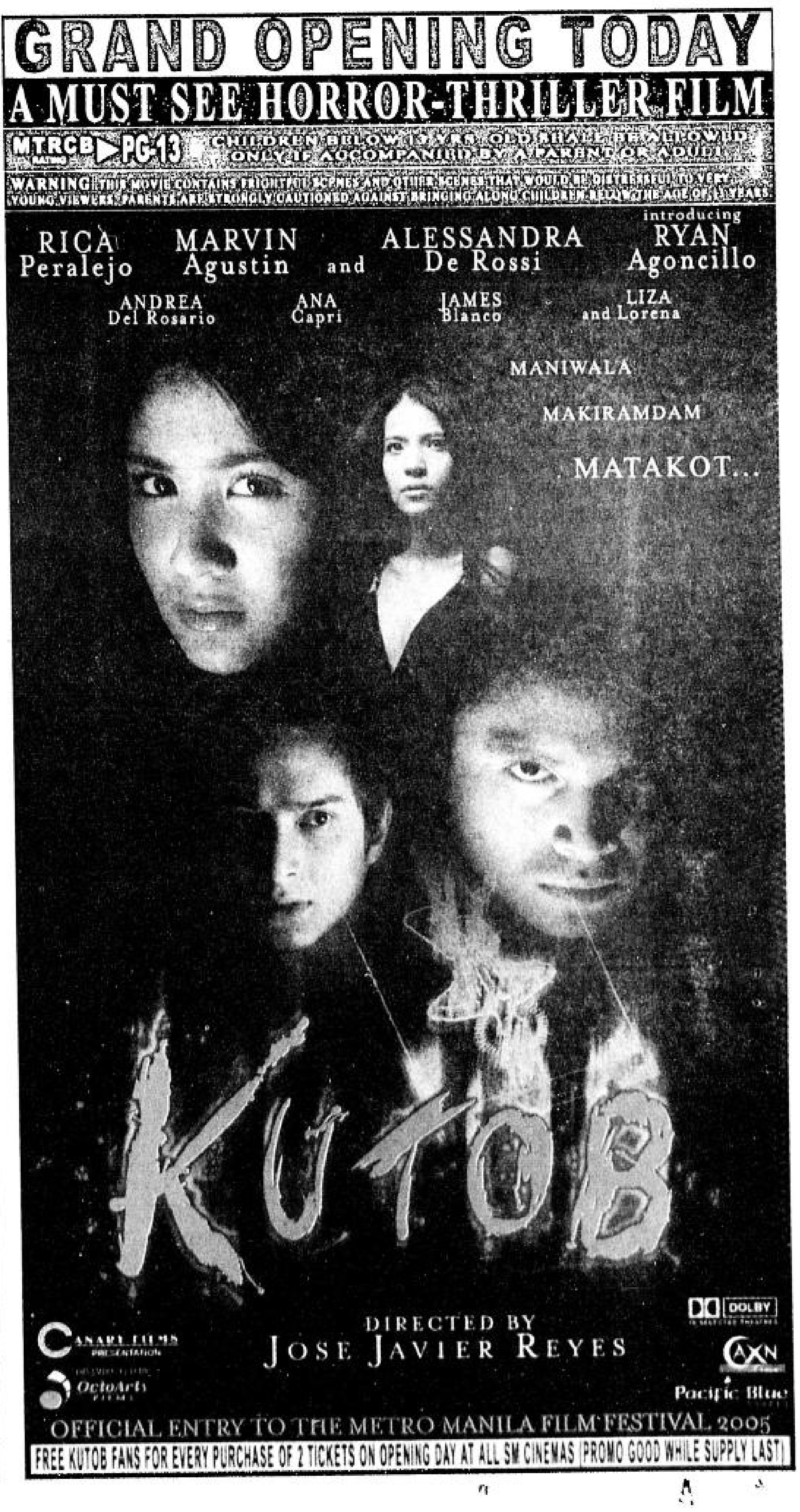
Enteng Kabisote 2

DIRECTED BY
TONY Y. REYES

OKAY KA FAIRY KO...
THE LEGEND CONTINUES

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005

FREE ENTENG MASK FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF 2 TICKETS ON OPENING DAY AT ALL SM CINEMAS. (PROMO GOOD WHILE SUPPLY LAST)



GRAND OPENING TODAY
A MUST SEE HORROR-THRILLER FILM
MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 CHILDREN BELOW 13 YRS. OLD SHALL BE ALLOWED ONLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR ADULT
WARNING: THIS MOVIE CONTAINS FRIGHTFUL SCENES AND OTHER SCENES THAT WOULD BE DISTRESSFUL TO VERY YOUNG VIEWERS. PARENTS ARE STRONGLY CAUTIONED AGAINST BRINGING ALONG CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 13 YEARS

RICA Peralejo MARVIN Agustin and ALESSANDRA De Rossi introducing RYAN Agoncillo
ANDREA Del Rosario ANA Capri JAMES Blanco LIZA and Lorena

MANIWALA
MAKIRAMDAM
MATAKOT...

KUTOB

DIRECTED BY
JOSE JAVIER REYES

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL 2005
FREE KUTOB FANS FOR EVERY PURCHASE OF 2 TICKETS ON OPENING DAY AT ALL SM CINEMAS (PROMO GOOD WHILE SUPPLY LAST)

Starry, starry Christmas

From page A2-4

every Christmas.

LUKE MEJARES

Going home to Bohol is one thing that makes my Christmas really merry. After working so hard all year in Manila, I make it a point to visit relatives and have Noche Buena with them. I will buy myself a new coat for a present.

LUKE: Hello, Bohol.

POLO RAVALES

I attend Simbang Gabi. I don't buy myself a gift. I just make sure the people around me are happy.

JEREMY MARQUEZ

Every Christmas everyone in the family has a new outfit. We also give goods to the less fortunate. I don't have a gift to myself this year. *Kulang sa budget. Dami ko kasi kapatid na reregaluhan. Sila muna bago ako.* But if I had extra money, I'ld like to buy new shades. I only have one *kasi*.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com)

ELSE WHERE

'Lost' tops old virgin and Kong

LOS ANGELES—The cast of "Lost," ABC's hit drama of air crash survivors marooned on a mysterious island, beat a 40-year-old virgin and King Kong's girlfriend for the title, "Entertainer of the Year."

Entertainment Weekly named what it called a group of "treasured islanders," the cast of "Lost," as its Entertainer of the Year, calling the show one of the "biggest cult breakouts since The X-Files."

In second place was Steve Carell, the star of the hit film "The 40-Year-Old Virgin." The magazine cited him for his ability to play an implausible boob.

"You're telling me I have a gift for the pathetic. If I thought about it too long, it would depress me," Carell told the magazine.

Third was Naomi Watts, who plays the blond actress befriended by Kong in the new film reviving the classic tale of ape meets girl, ape loves girl, ape loses girl.

Kayne West, the producer-turned-rapper, was fourth and actress Felicity Huffman was fifth, praised both for her performance in "Desperate Housewives" and as a man on the verge of completing a sex-change operation in "TransAmerica."

Completing the top 10 were, in order: George Clooney, Vince Vaughn, Gwen Stefani, children's book hero Harry Potter and rising Hollywood star Terrence Howard, who the magazine said "stunned audiences with Oscar-caliber performances in not one but two of the year's best independent films, "Crash" and "Hustle and Flow." *Reuters*

SHANG CINEPLEX

① CLOSED
② CLOSED
③ CLOSED
④ CLOSED
PREMIERE THEATRE CLOSED

Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

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A Blockbuster Gift for All Seasons
The Shang Cineplex Gift Certificates
Treat your family and friends to a thrilling movie experience only at the Shang.
Cinema Treats - for Cinemas 1,2,3 and 4
Premiere Rewards - for the Premiere Theatre

Regular Ticket Price
Cinemas 1 to 4 - P150
Premiere Theatre - P295 (includes unlimited popcorn and beverage) (except for blockbuster)
Call 633-7851. loc. 171 or 633-2227 / 633-4738 for more details

Shangri-La Plaza

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY)	CLOSED
2 (DOLBY)	CLOSED
3 (DOLBY)	CLOSED
4 (DOLBY)	CLOSED
PREMIERE (DOLBY)	CLOSED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS)	RESERVED
2 (SDDS)	RESERVED
3 (DTS)	RESERVED
4 GOLD (DTS)	EXODUS
5 GOLD (DOLBY)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
6 GOLD (SDDS)	KUTOB
7 GOLD (DOLBY)	TERRORIST HUNTER
8 (DOLBY STEREO)	MULAWIN
9 (DOLBY STEREO)	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
10 (DOLBY STEREO)	AKO LEGAL WIFE

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE 2
3 (DOLBY)	TERRORIST HUNTER
4 (DOLBY)	KUTOB

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1	MULAWIN
2 (DTS)	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
3 (DTS)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4	MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1	ENTENG KABISOTE
2	MULAWIN
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
4 (DTS)	MULAWIN

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320

1	MULAWIN
2	EXODUS
3 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)

1	EXODUS
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216

1	MULAWIN
2	TERRORIST HUNTER
3	KUTOB
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927

1 (DOLBY)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 (DOLBY)	KUTOB
3 (DOLBY)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DOLBY)	EXODUS

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228

1 (DOLBY)	EXODUS
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3	KUTOB
4	TERRORIST HUNTER
5	MULAWIN

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266160

3	EXODUS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5	AKO LEGAL WIFE

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1	ENTENG KABISOTE
2	MULAWIN
3	TERRORIST HUNTER
4	KUTOB

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504286, 5433994

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	TERRORIST HUNTER
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1	MULAWIN
2	TERRORIST HUNTER
3	KUTOB

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX)	MULAWIN
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DTS EX)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4	EXODUS

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, Telephone No. (044) 600-3025

1	MULAWIN
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1	MULAWIN
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DOLBY)	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4 (DTS)	EXODUS

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1	MULAWIN
2	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
3 (DOLBY)	ENTENG KABISOTE
4 (DTS)	EXODUS

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271

1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE -2
3	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
4	MULAWIN

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1	MULAWIN
2	EXODUS

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748

1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	TERRORIST HUNTER

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (EDDS)	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	MULAWIN
3	KUTOB
4 (DTS)	EXODUST

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY)	EXODUST
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3 (DTS)	MULAWIN
4	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
5	ENTENG KABISOTE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

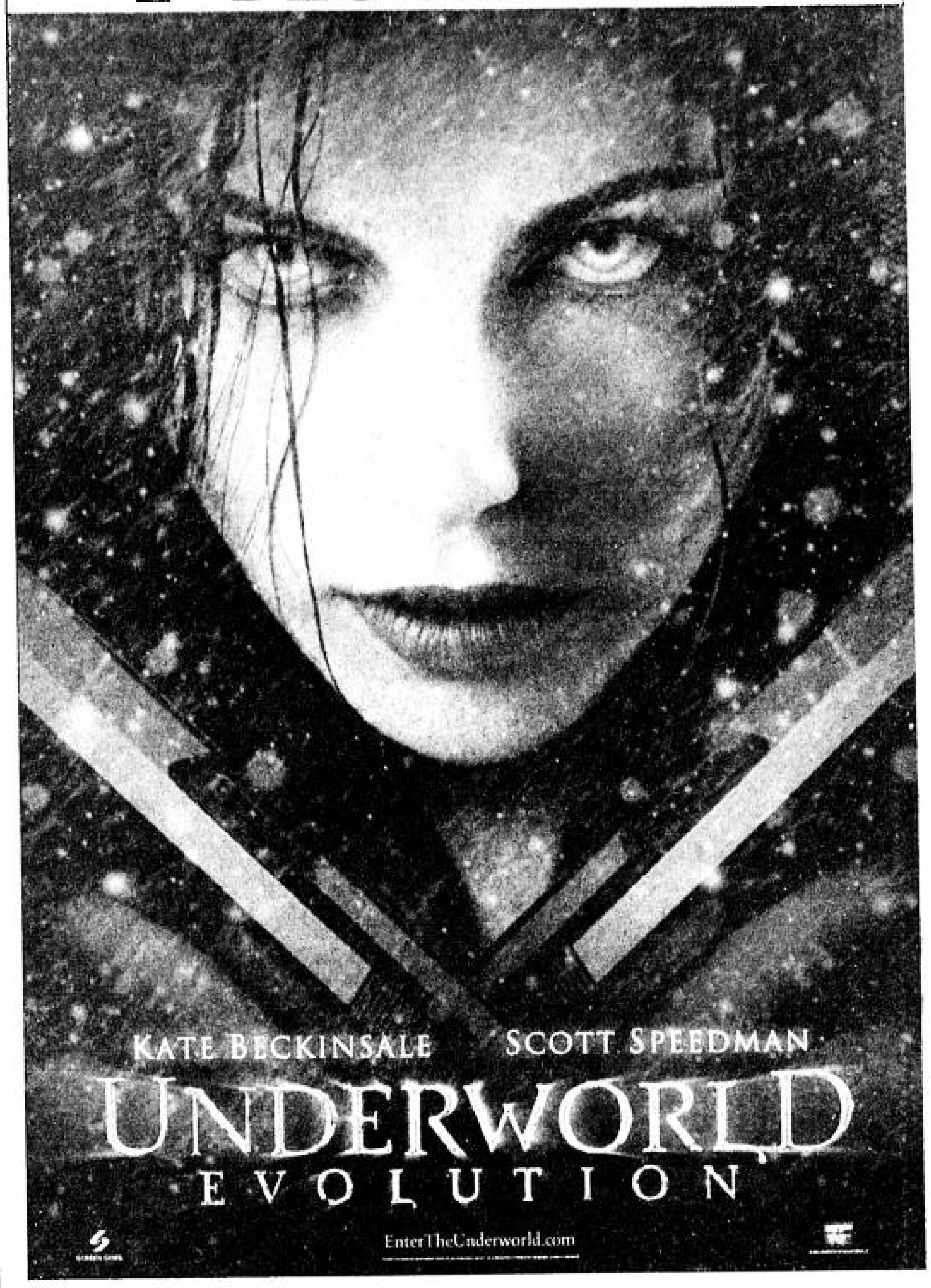
1	SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2	ENTENG KABISOTE
3	MULAWIN
4	EXODUST

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

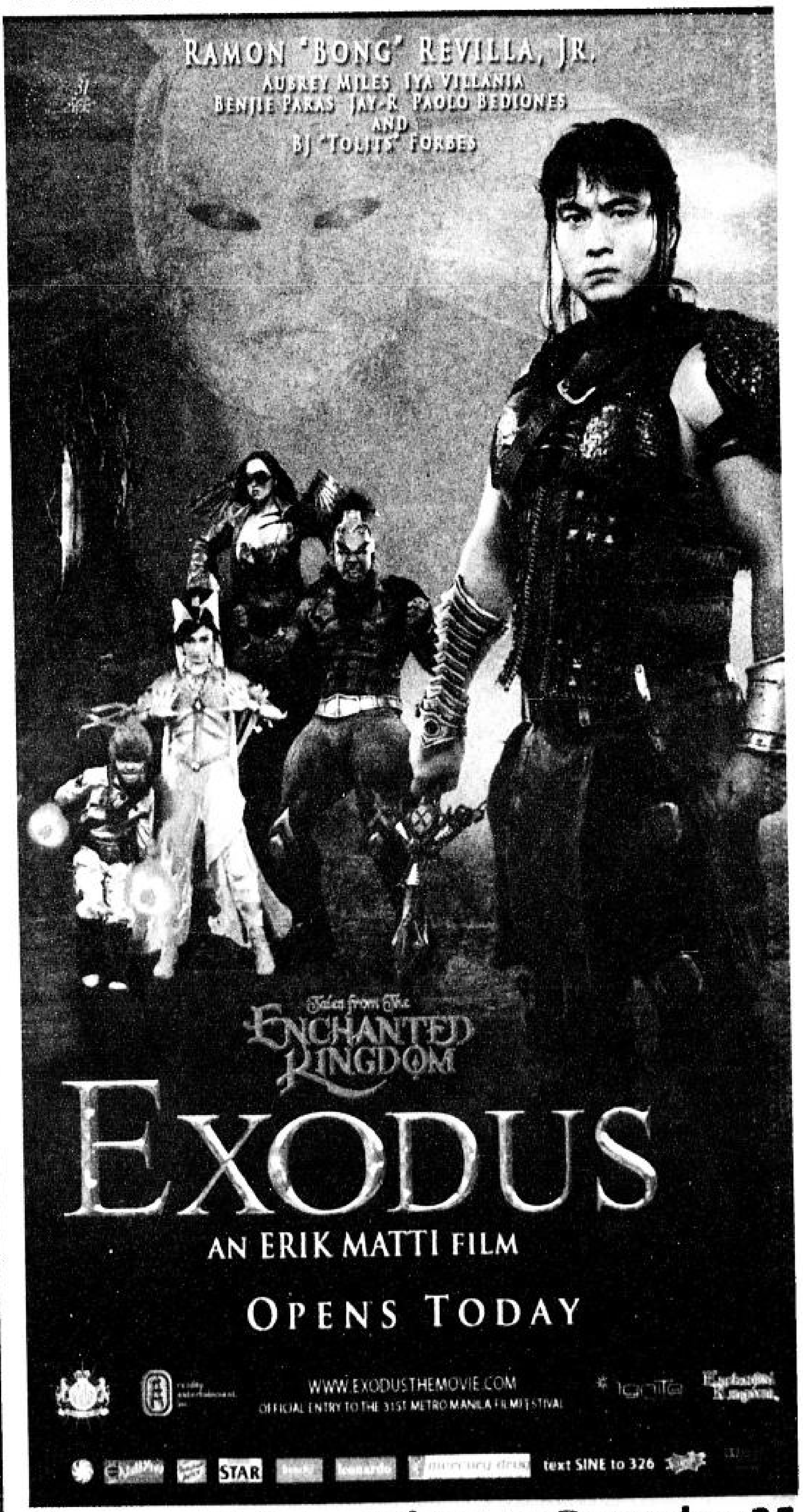
1	AKO LEGAL WIFE
2	ENTENG KABISOTE

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

COMING SOON
THE SEQUEL TO THE #1 BLOCKBUSTER



A NEW HERO IS BORN TODAY!!!



RAMON 'BONG' REVILLA, JR.
AUBREY MILES IYA VILLANIA
BENJIE PARAS JAY-R PAOLO BEDIONES
AND
BJ "TOLITS" FORBES
Tales from The ENCHANTED KINGDOM
EXODUS
AN ERIK MATTI FILM
OPENS TODAY
WWW.EXODUSTHEMOVIE.COM
OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 31ST METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL
STAR
text SINE to 326

For every ticket purchase on December 25
get a FREE ticket to
Enchanted Kingdom™ worth P500!
Promo good while supplies last. Available in Metro Manila and selected key cities nationwide.
PEROTI LAGUNA PERMIT NO. 5-12 - 435 SERIES OF 2005

POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

ENTENG KABISOTE: THE LEGEND CONTINUES GP 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	**MULAWIN** GP 12:15,2:40,5:05, 7:30,9:55	**TERRORIST HUNTER** PG13 12:10,2:30,4:50, 7:10,9:30
KUTOB PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10	**SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL** PG13 12:55,3:15,5:35, 7:55,10:15	**EXODUS: TALES FROM THE ENCHANTED KINGDOM** GP 12:40,3:00,5:20, 7:40,10:00

SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL: 898 1440-41

EASTWOOD CINEMAS

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave. (C-5) Quezon City

For inquiries, call:
687-6963
GUARANTEED SEATS
MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1	**AKO LEGAL WIFE** 12:05, 2:35, 5:05, 7:35, 10:05 PG-13
2	**ENTENG KABISOTE 2** 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 GP
3	**TERRORIST HUNTER** 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30 PG-13
4	**KUTOB** 1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00 PG-13

GREENHILLS CINEMAS

GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA

THEATRE MALL
GREENHILLS
a landmark reinvented!
NOW SHOWING

♿

CINEMA 1 **AKO LEGAL WIFE** PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50

CINEMA 2 **ENTENG KABISOTE 2 - GP** 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
...a dinetertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3 **TERRORIST HUNTER - PG13** 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50

CINEMA 4 **KUTOB** PG13 11:30, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30, 8:50

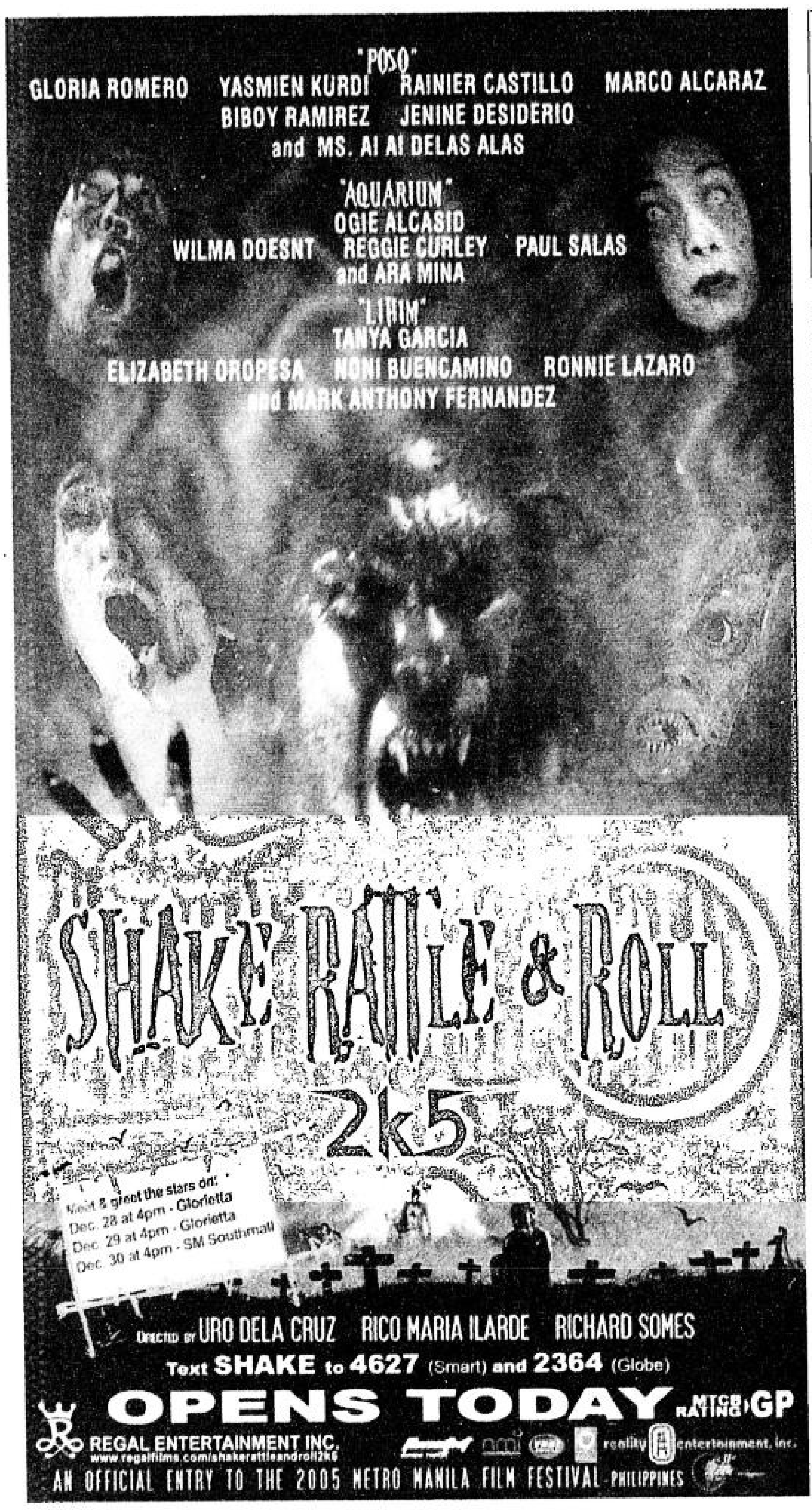
CINEMA 5 **EXODUS - PG13** 10:40, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM

January 27, 2005	JED MADELA	9PM
February 3 & 4	NINA&NYOY	9PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635



"POSO"
GLORIA ROMERO YASMIEN KURDI RAINIER CASTILLO MARCO ALCARAZ
BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
and MS. AI AI DELAS ALAS

"AQUARIUM"
OGIE ALCASID
WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA

"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
and MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ

SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL 2k5

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 28 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall

DIRECTED BY URO DELA CRUZ RICO MARIA ILARDE RICHARD SOMES

Text **SHAKE** to **4627** (Smart) and **2364** (Globe)

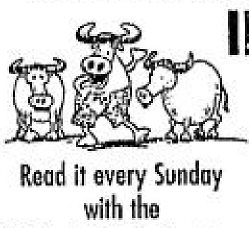
OPENS TODAY MTRCB RATING GP

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/shakerattleandroll2k6

reality entertainment, inc.

AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 2005 METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

From the nation's No. 1 Newspaper:
INQUIRER



Read it every Sunday with the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

JOB Market

Ako Legal Wife

Mano Po 4?!

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
8pm - Star City

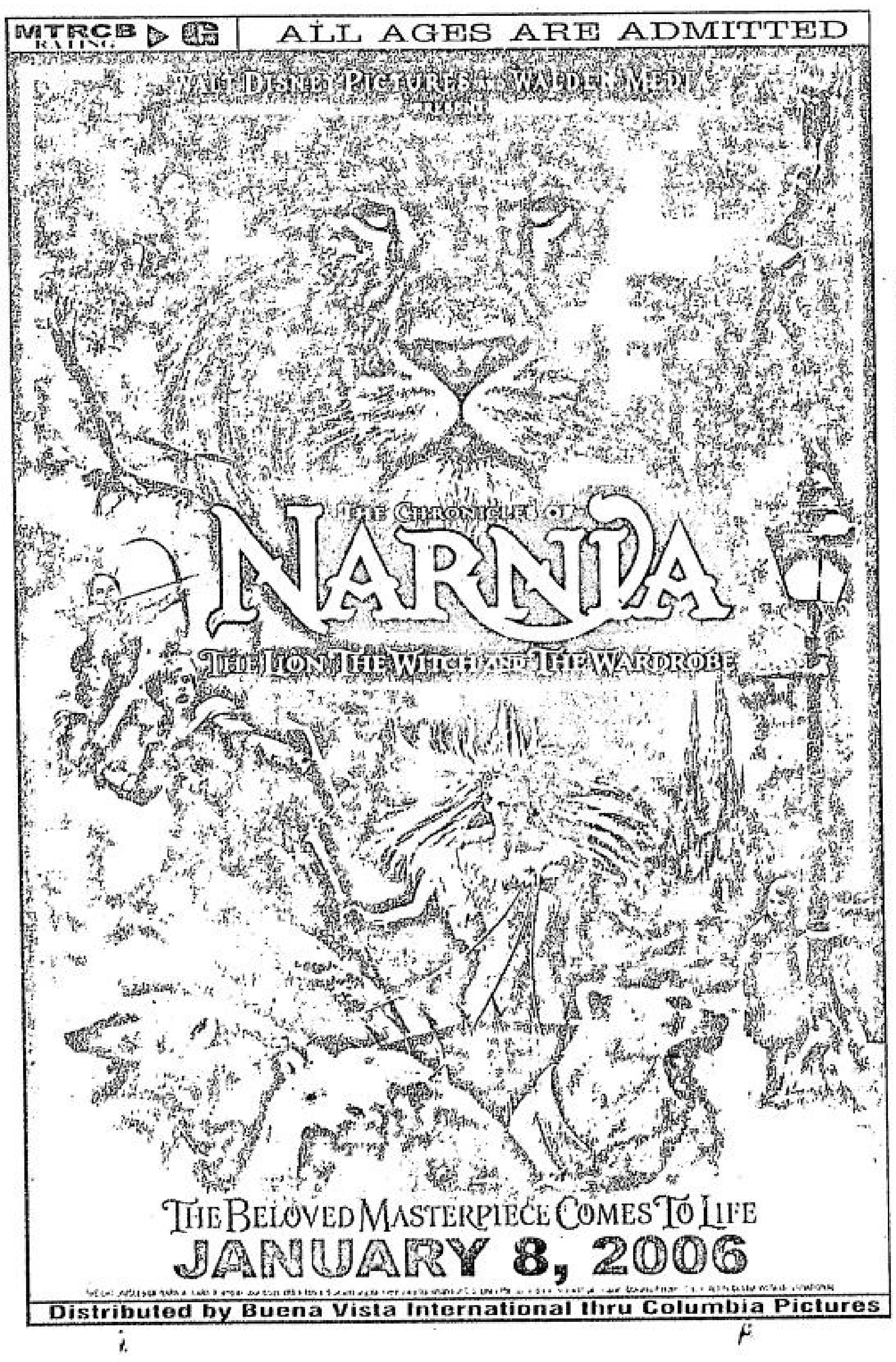
Rufa Mae Cherry Pie Jay Zsa Zsa

Text **WIFE** to **4627** (Smart) and **2364** (Globe)

OPENS TODAY

MTRCB RATING: PG-13

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/akolegalwife



MTRCB RATING ▷ G ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED

WALT DISNEY PICTURES and WALDEN MEDIA

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

THE BELOVED MASTERPIECE COMES TO LIFE
JANUARY 8, 2006

Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

CHRISTOPHER DE LEON DENNIS TRILLO BOOTS ANSON-ROA & EDDIE GARCIA
JENNYLYN MERCADO MARK HERRAS PAULEEN LUNA

True love happens once in a...
BLUE MOON

a Palanca Award-winning screenplay
a film by JOEL LAMANGAN

Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 29 at 4pm -Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm -SM North EDSA

POLO RAVALES REGGIE CURLEY TIN TIN BERSOLA-BABAO PAOLO PARAISO
VANGIE LABALAN TIN ARNALDO PINKY AMADOR JANNA VICTORIA RJ ROSALES JANUARY ISAAC ALAN PAULE JIM PEBANCO

AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL-PHILIPPINES

OPENS JANUARY 1, 2006
Text **MOON** to **4627**
(Smart & Talk 'N Text)

REGAL ENTERTAINMENT INC.
www.regalfilms.com/bluemoon
WWW.YEHEY.COM NoCurfew

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FOR ALL BRANCHES

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA

1 KUTOB • THX	6 MULAWIN
2 TERRORIST HUNTER	7 EXODUS
3 ENTENG KABISOTE	8 EXODUS
4 AKO LEGAL WIFE	9 ENTENG KABISOTE
5 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL	10 MULAWIN

ERMITA

1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	5 KUTOB 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
3 MULAWIN 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00	6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00
4 TERRORIST HUNTER 10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50	7 EXODUS 10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:40 10:00

METRO EAST

1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL 11:15 1:45 4:15 6:45 9:15	5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
2 EXODUS	6 TERRORIST HUNTER
3 ENTENG KABISOTE	7 KUTOB
4 MULAWIN 11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00	8 EXODUS

NOVALICHES

- 1 EXODUS
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
- 3 KUTOB
- 4 TERRORIST HUNTER
- 5 MULAWIN
- 6 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 7 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 8 EXODUS

CITISQUARE MALABON

- 1 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
- 2 EXODUS
- 3 RESERVE
- 4 RESERVE

PIONEER

687-5378

- 1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
- 3 EXODUS
- 4 MULAWIN

Official Entry to the Metro Manila Film Festival 2005
upclose and personal with the cast of
KUTOB
rica peralejo • marvin agustin alessandra da rossi and ryan agoncillo

DECEMBER 26 (Monday)
Cinema Lobby
Ermita - 1:00PM Metro East - 3:00PM
Galleria - 5:00PM

Regular Showing: December 25

STA. ROSA

(049) 837-0907

- 1 KING KONG
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 3 MULAWIN
- 4 EXODUS
- 5 AKO LEGAL WIFE

LIPA

(043) 757-3664
(043) 312-5870

- 1 KING KONG
- 2 EXODUS
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 4 MULAWIN
- 5 AKO LEGAL WIFE

DASMARINAS

- 1 MULAWIN
- 2 TERRORIST HUNTER
- 3 KUTOB
- 4 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
- 5 EXODUS

ANGELES

- 1 KING KONG
- 2 EXODUS
- 3 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 4 MULAWIN

IMUS

- 1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 2 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 3 MULAWIN
- 4 TERRORIST HUNTER
- 5 KUTOB
- 6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

STARMILLS

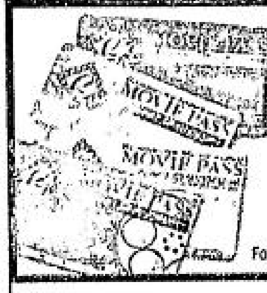
- 1 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 2 TERRORIST HUNTER
- 3 KUTOB
- 4 EXODUS
- 5 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 6 MULAWIN

BACOLOD

- 1 KING KONG
- 2 EXODUS
- 3 MULAWIN
- 4 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 5 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 6 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL

ILOILO

- 1 KUTOB
- 2 SHAKE, RATTLE and ROLL
- 3 EXODUS
- 4 AKO LEGAL WIFE
- 5 ENTENG KABISOTE
- 6 MULAWIN



The
Perfect Gift
All Year Round

A Pre Paid Movie Pass to the Hottest Seats in town.

Get Special discounts for volume purchases!

For marketing and events/reservations please call Marketing Services Department at 687-7945 to 47 locals 14 and 15

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Love Mall!

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Now accepted in over 1,000 BPI affiliated establishments including restaurants, department stores, specialty shops, spas, and more in five Ayala Malls.

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Ayala Center Cebu : (032) 232-0380 Market! Market! : 886-7519

BPI

www.ayalamalls.com.ph

At the Activity Center

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	AYALA CENTER CEBU
Avid Sony Exhibit December 19 to 27, 2005 Glorietta Activity Center **Christmas Fireworks Display** December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	**Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit** Dec. 19 to 31, 2005	**Sunsilk Mall Tour Exhibit** December 27 to 28, 2005 **Wagas Exhibit / Uyfang Bazaar** December 1 to 31, 2005

AYALA GREENBELT

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

GREENBELT 1 Onstage AYALA CENTER

NOT JUST JAZZ CHRISTMAS
December 28 & 29
For inquiries, please call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM

Registration for Art Workshops now on-going at Ayala Museum
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 29.
Online registration at www.ayalamuseum.org

AYALA CINEMAS

THX

Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.

Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	4 EXODUS
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	3 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 TERRORIST HUNTER	5 KUTOB	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	7 EXODUS
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 AKO LEGAL WIFE	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 2		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MULAWIN GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX TERRORIST HUNTER GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 KUTOB GUARANTEED SEATS	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL GUARANTEED SEATS	5 EXODUS GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX MULAWIN	2 TERRORIST HUNTER		
	3 KUTOB	4 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	5 EXODUS	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 2	2 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL	3 MULAWIN	4 TERRORIST HUNTER

AYALA CINEMAS CELEBRATES

The 31st Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines 2005

Watch this year's Metro Manila Film Festival entries in Ayala Cinemas & get a chance to meet & greet your favorite movie stars live!

December 26 / 6:00 PM
Stars of **KUTOB** live at the Glorietta 1 cinema lobby

December 27 / 6:00 PM
Stars of **ENTENG KABISOTE 2** live at the Glorietta 1 cinema lobby

December 28 / 4:00 PM
Stars of **ENTENG KABISOTE 2, SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL, BLUE MOON, MULAWIN & LAGOT KA SA KUYA KO**
live at the Glorietta Activity Center

December 29 / 4:00 PM
REGAL EXTRAVAGANZA feat. stars of **SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL, AKO LEGAL WIFE, MULAWIN & BLUE MOON,**
live at the Glorietta Activity Center

AYALA CINEMAS
MBC MANILA BROADCASTING COMPANY

Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900
Customer Service text hotline:	Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu -	(032) 231 5342 loc 324

All-Digital Cinemas

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
Developed and managed by Ayala Land, Inc.

Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

- ① SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL
- ② KUTOB
- ③ MULAWIN
- ④ ENTENG KABISOTE 2
- ⑤ AKO LEGAL WIFE

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET! MARKET!
The fun is in the finds
MARKET! MARKET! Bonifacio Global City
The fun is in the finds
Christmas Shopping Bag

1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

SMART
Buddy GSM
Pre-paid
Maligayang
Pag-da-download!

Gawing mas merry ang Christmas with these cute and colorful downloadables only from SMART Buddy!

For monotone: Text TONE <keyword> to 235
For polytone: Text POLY <keyword> to 235

Ringtone

SONG TITLE	KEYWORD
Kumukutikutitap	*KUTITAP*
Pinoy Ako (Xmas Version)	*PINOYAKOXMAS*
Pasko Na Sinta Ko	*PASKONA*
Sana Ngayong Pasko	*NGAYONGPASKO*

12-Day Christmas Tone Subscription – For Monotones: Text PASKOTONE to 235 For Polytones: Text PASKOPOLY to 235

Text LOGO <keyword> to 238

Logos

MERRYTIGGER
MISTLEPIGLET
POOHNEWYR
POOHSTAR

Text PIC <keyword> to 238

Picture Messages

EEYOREHOLIDAYS
MERRYTIGGER
SANTAPOOH
WISHPOOH

Text MMS <keyword> to 238

MMS Wallpapers

POOHCAROL
POOHSNOWMAN
POOHSOCK
TIGGERHOLIDAYS

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For monotone: Text TONE <keyword> to 291
For polytone: Text POLY <keyword> to 291

Ringtone

SONG TITLE	KEYWORD
Jingle Bell Rock	*MC4*
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town	*MC8*
Do You Hear What I Hear	*MC7*
All I Want For Christmas Is You	*MC2*

Text LOGO <keyword> to 291

Logos

MC2
MC3
MC4
MC5

Text PIC <keyword> to 291

Picture Messages

MC1
MC2
MC4
MC6

Text MMS <keyword> to 291

MMS Wallpapers

MC5
MC10
MC14
MC15

Text XMAS to 382

MMS Wallpapers

Text MCARD <keyword> to 356

MMS Musical Cards

C3
C4
C12
C26

Text PLAY <keyword> to 211

CANDY
XMASPOKER
BUBBLES
SUDOKU

CHRISTMAS STARCALLER GREETINGS

Listen to your favorite stars' Christmas messages for you!
Just text <code><mobile no.> to 3262

CELEBRITIES & THEIR GREETINGS	CODE
Anne Curtis - Singing Jingle Bells & Greetings	V6403
Aubrey Miles - I'm Just Calling To Surprise You	V6404
Richard Guiterrez - I'm Just Calling To Greet You	V6424
Vhong Navarro - Singing Jingle Bells & Greetings	V6428

CHRISTMAS TRUETONES

Just text TRUE <keyword> to 286

ARTIST & THEIR SONGS	KEYWORD
Barbie's Cradle - Silent Night	SILENT1
Side A - We Wish You A Merry Christmas	MERRYXMAS
Mojofly - Angels We Have Heard On High	ANGELS1
South Border - Hark The Herald Angels Sing	HARK

To check if your phone is compatible with Truetones, send NOKIA, MOTOROLA, SAMSUNG, SIEMENS, or SE (SONY ERICSSON) to 286.
P30/true tone

DEAR GOD.
Enjoy a spiritual high this Christmas via Bible verses and inspiring messages. Just send the keyword ***DEAR GOD*** *to* ***463.***

To set GPRS settings on your phone, text SET GPRS <phone model> to 211. Ex. SET GPRS N6600. To activate GPRS on your phone, text GPRS ON to 333.
To set MMS settings on your phone, text SET MMS <phone model> to 211. Ex. SET MMS N6600. To activate MMS on your phone, text MMS ON to 333.

For questions, comments, or concerns, you may call the SMART Hotline at 888-1111; send a text message to 888 (P1.00 per message sent in excess of the FREE TEXT allocation); e-mail us at customercare@smart.com.ph, or visit our website at www.smart.com.ph. Text messages cost P2.50 each. Logos, Picture Messages, MMS Images, and Tones are P15.00 each. Each Java game download cost P35.00.

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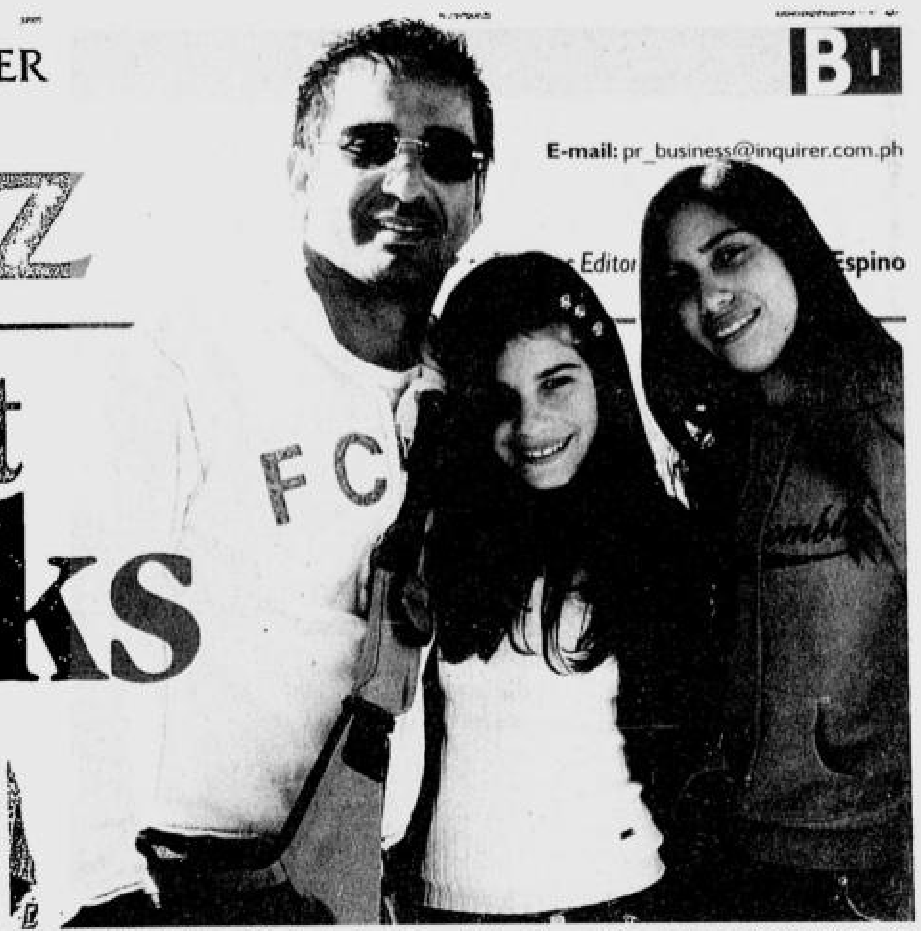
Simply Amazing!

Sunday BIZ

E-mail: pr_business@inquirer.com.ph

Editor

Espino



WITH DAUGHTERS, Charlotte & Olivia, at the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa in June 2005.

More than just good looks

DUPASQUIER

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

GOOD LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING.

In the case of 43-year-old French-Filipino Jacques A. Dupasquier, he is so regularly seen in the pages of society magazines and the latest hip places of the party circuit that it is easy to dismiss him as just another pretty face living off his parents' money.

But that will not be accurate, as his partners, clients, bankers and even competitors in the highly-competitive real estate industry can attest to.

Dupasquier is, among others, the brains and brawn behind 19-1 Realty Corp., 18-2 Realty Corp. and Bonifacio West Development Corp., joint venture partners of the Rufino group.

Together, Dupasquier and Rufino built the Net Square building in Fort Bonifacio Global City, topped off the adjacent Net2 Square.

They are also building one more office building, Net3 Cube, and developing 12 residential projects with Megaworld Corp., also in Fort Bonifacio.

What he brings to the boardroom is a long experience in the real estate industry—his mother is an Aguirre of the BF Homes fame—and sales and marketing skills honed working for giant cosmetics firm L'Oreal in France, where he was born.

"I believe in working hard and playing even harder," Dupasquier tells SundayBiz with a smile.

Dupasquier squeezes the marrow out of life because he knows what it's like to be surrounded by death.

Joining paratroopers

Dupasquier had just finished his baccalaureate in France when he decided to take part in the military reserve officer training program, which was mandatory in France during his time.

He joined the paratroopers, thinking that since he was joining the infantry, might as well get a rush out of the experience. He ended at the top five of the class.

Dupasquier says he had so much fun in the paratroopers that he signed up for the army for another year, with full pay as a second lieutenant and platoon leader at just 21, the youngest in the army.

"That was the first major decision I did without the consent of my father," says the youngest child of Pierre Dupasquier, who opened the predecessor of Procter and Gamble in Paris and was a one-time president of P&G in the Philippines, when it was still known as the Philippine Manufacturing Corp.

"BEHIND enemy lines" at Beirut, Lebanon in 1983

While his parents were not too happy with his decision to join the army, Dupasquier was having the time of his life.

The fun abruptly ended when his company was called upon to replace the 58 members of his regiment who died during the simultaneous bombing of the French and American embassies in Beirut, Lebanon on Oct. 23,1983.

It was just 10 days since the bombing when he was shipped out to Beirut, and his company immediately fell under enemy fire.

His arms still bear the marks of shrapnel wounds, but he knows he is lucky to have come out of Beirut alive. Other soldiers like his gunner, who was just on top of him, were not so lucky.

Dupasquier went back to France a changed, more focused, man.

He was invited to stay on in the army, but he turned down the offer saying that he had already achieved what any soldier dreams of—go into battle.

With that done, and he has the scars to prove it, he thought that there was nothing left for him to do in the army.

His battleground then shifted from the sands of Beirut to the paved, tree-lined streets of Babson College in Massachusetts where he graduated with a business degree, majoring in entrepreneurship and marketing.

New mission

To do well in business was his new mission.

His first job offer came from Procter and Gamble and he grabbed it. He is quick to add, however, that his father did not have anything to do with it as he worked for the company 13 years after his father left it.

FIRST JOB

Dupasquier was assistant brand manager for Camay, but the stint lasted for just two months as he took the better offer to work at L'Oreal as brand manager, handling the Mennen line and then the Dop shampoo.

He moved up the L'Oreal hierarchy and at one time was a group brand manager of Asia-Pacific, which included the Philippines.

Dupasquier left L'Oreal when he got an offer from British firm Rank Xerox group, which owns the Hard Rock Café group, to run three of its subsidiaries and to help it in its bid for the national lottery operations of the United Kingdom.

He shuttled between Paris and London, but he left before the bidding results were announced because he gave in to his mother's wishes and moved to the Philippines.

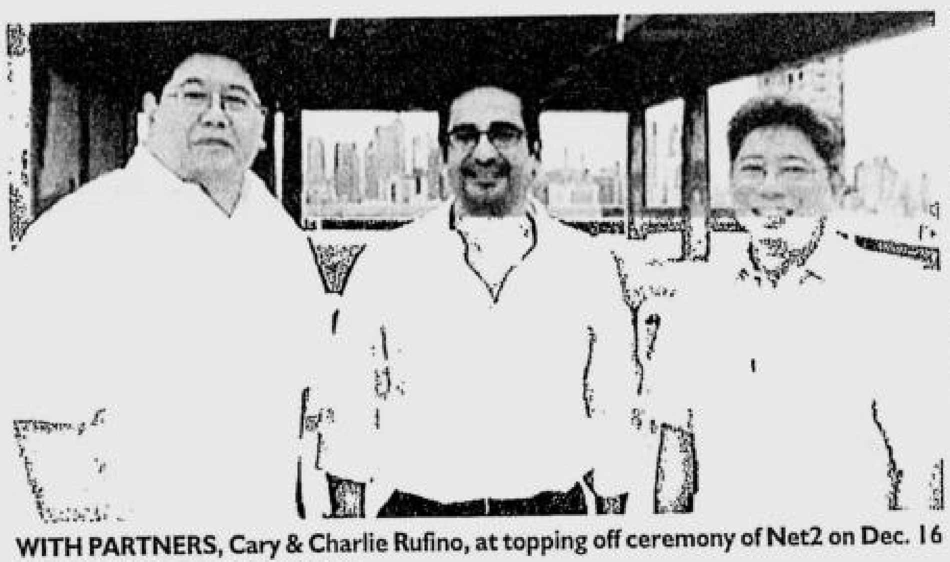
Dupasquier's decision came after the Supreme Court in the Philippines ruled that the takeover of the Banco Filipino group was illegal and ordered the return of its assets.

"I never really thought I would come back here," Dupasquier says, "But my mom said that if ever the thought of coming to the Philippines crossed my mind, then now would be a good time to do it."

In January 1994, he made his move. In the end, the challenge proved irresistible.

Dupasquier initially came to the Philippines to represent his mother's interests in the Banco Filipino group of companies, but he later struck out on his own and did real estate projects on the side.

His first development, with his own resources on hand, was a 335-house subdivision in Molino, Cavite, which started in 1995.



WITH PARTNERS, Cary & Charlie Rufino, at topping off ceremony of Net2 on Dec. 16 2005, 60 days ahead of schedule

That was quickly followed by other projects in Cebu and Davao.

He went out of Manila because he thought there was more space to operate for a starting real estate person like him in the province.

Then came the fateful meeting with Carlos Rufino and they talked about the great potential of investing in Fort Bonifacio.

Dupasquier then told Rufino that if the project was really so good, then they should go into the projects together. That conversation ended up in a 50-50 venture and a start of a beautiful friendship and partnership.

Their latest accomplishment is the topping off of the Net Square building, just one year since construction began.

Dupasquier is bullish on the prospects of the real estate industry, but says that he takes a generally conservative approach to developments, just like his partner, Rufino.

"You make a lot of judgment calls in this business," Dupasquier says, "But I always believe that you should spend only what you have."

He stresses that real estate is a very cyclical business. Those that have enough resources to weather the dip in the cycle will end up making a buck when the industry turns.

It's been more than 10 years since he made his fateful move to the country of his mother's family, and he has no regrets.

"As long as I'm around, I am not complaining," he says.

His parents, especially his father, still call him up from Switzerland just to see how he's doing and he takes 15 weeks off every year to visit his two daughters by his first wife, who is a Brazilian.

In the weeks in between visits, he works at the next challenge worth his time and effort.

"I am very motivated to do things worth my time," he says, "And I do work, though I try not to show it."

Seaweed gives this family a good Christmas

By Michael F. Sarcauga
PDI Mindanao Bureau

PAGADIAN CITY—THIS CHRISTMAS, Lanie Tagud plans to serve sumptuous food.

She even bought new clothes for her husband and her three children.

Lanie says this is her way of thanking God for the straight five years of good harvest in "*agar-agar*."

Lanie, 33 and her husband, Joseph, 34, "struck gold" when they joined the city government's seaweed planting program.

City officials embarked on the program after learning that seaweed farming is profitable livelihood for coastal dwellers in Jolo and Tawi-tawi.

The Tagud family is only one of the many families benefiting from the program, which was launched in March through an executive order issued by Mayor Samuel Co.

The EO adopted seaweed as the city's main produce.

The scheme followed the Department of Trade and Industry's "one town, one product" (Otop), which was patterned after Japan's "one village, one product" (Ovop).

A kilo of dried seaweeds is twice the price of copra and thrice the price of rice and corn, according to a survey conducted by the DTI.

It was a gamble of a month's income from fishing when Lanie pushed her husband to try their luck in the seaweed program.

From a meager capital of P2,000, their money grew to P10,000 after two months.

This year alone, the family earned P100,000.

"Agar-agar," (Euchema cotonii) is harvested after two months from planting.

Since then the family depended on "agar-agar" planting, as major source of income.

Her son, Gerald, 13, tells the INQUIRER that they were able to buy television sets, digital video player, a refrigerator and a washing machine from the family's new livelihood.

Lanie says she was planning to build a bigger house and engage in seaweed buy and sell business soon.

For her children, she plans to send them to a university and see to it they could finish college.

Like most children of poor families here, Lanie was not able to earn a degree.

Speaking in Cebuano during an interview at the family's farming site in the coastal waters of Bomba village, one of the 12 coastal villages of this city, Lanie says it is always fun to plant seaweeds.

"The sea in front of our home is our backyard where we spent the whole day during planting season tending our "agar-agar," Lanie says while tying the weeds in a nylon string that resembles a spider web spread in the sea.

Compared to land-based farming, "agar-agar" is less laborious and requires only a small capital according to City Agriculturist Pedrito Mejorada.

"Unlike rice or corn farming, seaweed farming does not require fertilizers and pesticide. It also requires less machineries and labor," Mejorada says.

Most farmers here start their seaweed farming with small capital.

During cropping season, Lanie and her husband would spend three hours early morning each day tending their crop.

After this, her husband still has time for fishing.

Lanie says because the return is very good, her husband plans to expand their area to a hectare.

To cope up with the growing area, Lanie says they were planning to buy a motorized banca and hire a caretaker.

Mejorada says aside from boosting the city's economy, seaweed farming also helps the environment.

"Below the seaweed farms, fish can breed," he says.

COMPARED to land-based farming, "agar-agar" is less laborious and requires only a small capital.

ADR to fastrack decisions on construction cases

THE COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING Consultants of the Philippines (Cecophil), through the efforts of its president, Salvador P. Castro and in partnership with the Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (CIAC), the United States Agency International Development (USAID) and the Asia Foundation, is spearheading the campaign for national awareness of Republic Act No. 9285 or the "Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2004 (ADR Law) and its impact on the Construction Industry.

Castro firmly believes that with the ADR signed into law, the need for an aggressive information campaign is both timely and imperative. The information drive will emphasize the need to redirect the construction industry into resolving disagreements using other non-judicial and progressive means such as mediation or arbitration and to divert pending construction-related cases to the proper body in order to decongest the courts.

The nationwide information drive has been conducted in Metro Manila, Davao City and Cagayan de Oro. The Metro Manila forum served as the kick-off point and was attended by 230 participants representing the cross-section of the construction industry stakeholders. The event highlight is the signing of the manifesto endorsing the nationwide conduct of the forum by representatives of the following organizations whose commitment is crucial to the campaign's success: Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (Ciac); CECOPHIL; Philippine Constructors Association Inc. (PCA); Confederation of Filipino Consulting Organizations Inc. (Cofilco); Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Inc. (PCCI); Chamber of Real Estate & Builders Association Inc. (Creba), Philippine Institute of Construction Arbitrators Inc. (Pica) and the Philippine Technological Council (PTC).

The passage of the landmark law has also affirmed the Construction Industry Arbitration Commission's (CIAC) jurisdiction over construction related disputes. In addition, the law also mandates the referral of all construction related cases pending in courts to the CIAC for arbitration, unless the parties agree to have the court resolve their disputes.

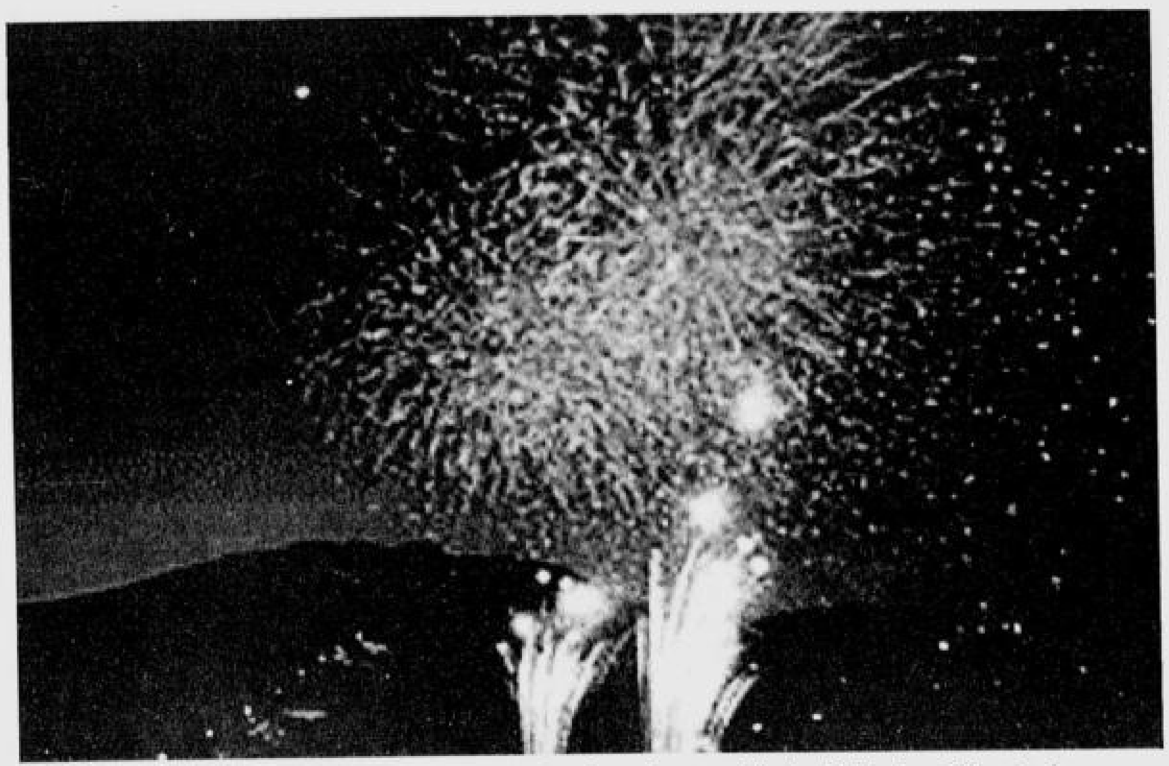
The local construction industry, which is one of the pillars and main engine of the Philippine economy, is commonly plagued with strained relationships between contractors and clients/developers. Disagreements abound because of the failure by the parties involved to comply faithfully with their contractual obligations. Compounding this problem is the time consuming process of court litigations that is part and parcel of all construction disputes. The ADR Law has expanded its coverage to project Owners, Project Managers, Design Professionals, Consultants, Quantity Surveyors, Bondsmen/Issuers of insurance policies.

No less than the Supreme Court has admitted the gravity of back-

ADR/B2

Pyrotechnics industry fires up

By Blooey Singson
Contributor



HISTORY has it that fireworks were among the first items bartered in the Philippine-China trade.

BULACAN HAS LONG BEEN tagged as the "Pyrotechnic Capital of the Philippines," where the manufacture of pyrotechnics is a cottage industry that roots back to ancient tradition.

History has it that fireworks were among the first items bartered in the Philippine-China trade. After World War II, the Americans brought modern firework manufacturing to the Philippines and the pyrotechnic industry in Bulacan has since been steadily growing.

Raising the bar

For years, Bulacan pyrotechnics has been a very crude industry, operating mostly on manual production to cut down on expenses. The traditional manufacturing process, passed on from generation to generation and developed with on-the-job experience, has posed health and safety risks on both the workers and consumers.

Chemicals (such as carbon black, potassium chlorates, aluminum, sulfur, heavy metals and dextrin) are ground and mixed. Metal powder is added to oxidizing radicals to produce heat and light, while the binder stabilizes the formulation until the explosive is ignited. The mixture is then stuffed into paper packets before the fuse is inserted.

Since the legalization of the industry in 1992, there has been little advancement in technology and safety standards, but the landscape of the Bulacan pyrotechnics industry was altered for the better with the efforts of Gov. Josefina Dela Cruz.

"It is an industry that is closely associated with our province and we know the big potentials in it. Bulacan is in fact already producing pyrotechnic devices within international standards, comparable to those being used in the Fourth of July celebrations. We are representing the Philippines in the 8th Macau International Fireworks Display Competition. We ranked 4th out of the 11 participating countries," De la Cruz proudly says.

In 1999, realizing the industry's potential, Dela Cruz instituted the Pyrotechnics Regulatory Board (PRB). It aims to modernize and develop the industry and promote public safety by the introduction of new technology and adoption of effective rules and regulations.

Chaired by Dela Cruz, the PRB is made up of different players in the industry. Among them are the Philippine Pyrotechnics Manufacturers and Dealers Association (PPMDAI), the Provincial Committee on Trade, the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), PNP, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Tesda) and the Bulacan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

Booming business

Bulacan has an estimated 500 licensed manufacturers concentrated in Bocaue, Sta. Maria, Pulilan, San Ildefonso, San Rafael and San Miguel. The industry provides employment and enterprise development opportunities for some 100,000 locals.

Manufacturers and dealers grew rapidly due to the high profits generated by the industry. Although it is hard to quantify revenues from pyrotechnics because of the proliferation of underground establishments and smuggled goods, Celso Cruz, chair of PPMDAI notes that the industry is worth about P350-400 million.

"We expect revenues to dip this year, though, as the country is going through difficult times," he predicts.

While some fireworks are being exported, the local market is more than enough to keep the industry flourishing, especially during the holiday season.

Demand for pyrotechnics is also closely related to the general economic health of the country.

On the average, May and December are peak months because of fiestas, Christmas, and New Year's Eve celebrations.

The major products in the pyrotechnic industry can be classified into two: firecrackers and pyrotechnic devices (fireworks). Firecrackers are explosives in paper cylinders that are devised as noisemakers, such as the *triangulo*, *bawang*, *watusi*, baby rocket, sky rocket (*kwitis*), *El Diablo* (labintador), and Judas' belt. Several types of dangerous firecrackers (such as the *pla-pla*, *lolo*, *superlolo*, giant *bawang*, giant whistle bomb, baby dynamite and *kabase*) are prohibited by law because of the intensity of their blast.

Fireworks or pyrotechnic devices are mostly aerial displays that produce lights and colored effects. Examples of these are fountains, Roman candles, sparklers, *trompillo*, bombshells, airwolves, and butterflies.

Law is bane to industry

The PRB is lobbying for changes to be made to RA 7183, which legalized pyrotechnics in the Philippines in 1992. The board is proposing amendments as the existing provisions cover the commercial manufacture of high explosives, and not small-scale businesses and other types of pyrotechnics devices.

According to Cruz, the coverage of the law should be amended.

"There are new types of pyrotechnics that have been invented and the coverage of the law is too localized and does not conform to international standards," Cruz explains.

In other countries, Cruz notes, all pyrotechnic devices are approved and certified by the government before they are sold on the market, because their laws have set standards for their products.

"Here, the law is too young and has too many problems to address," says Cruz. "Its provisions are not suitable for the concerns of the pyrotechnics industry."

Enforcement of the law has also been the bane of the pyrotechnics industry, as the local market is overrun by illegal manufacturers and dealers, as well as smuggled goods.

"We shouldn't have to compete with pyrotechnic devices from China or Taiwan. "Importation of pyrotechnics is prohibited by law, and yet smuggling is grossly rampant," states Cruz.

Initiative from the top

The provincial government has taken the initiative to upgrade the status and working standard of pyrotechnicians. Since 1999, the PRB has been working with the Industrial Technology Development Institute (ITDI) of the DOST in an effort to revolutionize the cottage industry.

The partnership aims to elevate local pyrotechnics to an industry that uses machines and local raw materials to manufacture laboratory-tested products that meet international quality standards.

In the first year of the program, the provincial government hired Canadian experts to ensure that manufacturing protocols were in place to be able to determine the parameters needed for quality analysis of pyrotechnic raw materials and products. This has enabled the industry to conduct serious quality control over its products today.

The PRB has also come up with Pyro Safety Rules and Guidelines, a code that delineates product standards covering the length of firecracker fuses, size of pyrotechnic cylinders, and the amount of explosive powder used for the different products. Under the standards, all firecrackers are limited to 150-200 milligrams of chemicals, so that in the event of an accident, the worst injury obtained would be a minor burn.

Dela Cruz further reports, "Today, pyrotechnic laboratory testing facilities are established, there is extensive focus on research and development, and plans to introduce a pyrotechnics curriculum as a technical course are being drawn."

The testing facilities are used to standardize, upgrade, and monitor products, with an emphasis on consumer safety. Manufacturers are required to submit their products for random sampling and testing prior to distribution to the local market. The results of the test also serve as basis for issuance and renewal of manufacturer's permits and licenses.

The PPMDAI, in coordination with Tesda, has also been conducting an ongoing series of training seminars and workshops for manufacturers, workers, suppliers, and dealers to make the industry more profitable and globally competitive. Fireworks displayers, also known as shooters (those who set off fireworks), are also trained by the PPMDAI to improve their cautiousness, skills, and creativity in launching bombshells.

Playing it safe

Bulacan Provincial Police and the PRB conduct regular inspections of factories and stalls to ensure that Pyro Safety Rules and Guidelines are being followed and products are properly labeled. Out of the daily inspections conducted on the onset of the holiday season, several illegal operators have been shut down and convicted. Contraband firecrackers were also confiscated.

Ingat-Paputok flyers have also been distributed to stalls throughout the towns of Bocaue, Baliuag, Sta. Maria, and San Rafael, for dissemination to the consuming public. These contain safety measures endorsed by the PRB to prevent accidents, loss of life, and damage to property caused by indiscriminate use of holiday explosives.

We encourage consumers to be alert," says dela Cruz. "They should only buy properly packaged and branded products at licensed establishments to ensure their safety and value for their money. Products should be properly labeled with the name of the product, the brand of the manufacturer, user instructions and appropriate warning.

TOP OFFICIALS of the mall do simultaneous openings of several stores.

SM tries different expansion strategy

SM IS ADOPTING A DIFFERENT EXPANSION strategy as SM stores recently opened at the newly renovated V-Mall (formerly Virra Mall) in Ortigas.

SM Appliance Center, Our Home, Toy Kingdom, ACE Hardware, and Watsons all opened simultaneously with a toast led by SM Department Store SVP Jojo Mendiola, San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, the guest of honor of the event. They were joined by Felicidad Sy, SM President Tessie Sy-Coson, SM Investments President Harley Sy, and SM Supermarket SVP Herbert Sy, as well as principals from each of the stores: Maria Teresa Cheng of SM Appliance Center, Philip Chua Yao of Our Home, Rosemarie Dy Lim of Toy Kingdom, ACE Hardware's Johnny Cobankiat, and Watsons-Philippines' Andrew Denby.

The decision of SM to open its stores in a mall is an experiment that can market future expansion plans of the conglomerate.

SM Appliance Center carries a good mix of reputable appliance brands—Sony, Samsung, sharp, Westinghouse, Panasonic, and JVC, as highlighted in its tagline, Our Name is Your Guarantee Established in 1983, it is also known for its professional sales staff, who are not only well trained in service, but also in product knowledge.

Toy Kingdom, which was established in 1995, carries a wide variety of toys for boys and girls of all ages. There is also an in house Interactive Zone, where kids can try out the latest X-Box games before buying.

Our Home focuses on large assortment of contemporary furniture and merchandise. This lifestyle store was established in 1997.

Two of these stores have global roots. The new ACE Hardware store, which is a franchise of the US based chain, is a haven for DIY enthusiasts; while the new Watsons Personal Care Store is a joint venture with the Hutchison Whampoa Group of Hong Kong.

ADR to fastrack decisions . . .

From page B1

logged cases that has reached alarming proportion thereby impairing the delivery of fast, efficient and fair justice. In fact, there are a million cases pending before the courts nationwide. A substantial portion could account for construction cases, which remain unresolved. This unwanted condition is a collective result of indiscriminate filing of cases in courts and the slow processing and resolution.

With the legal framework in place, the term ADR LAW is expected to become a by-word in the area of conflict resolution and as an effective mechanism in the settlement of legal claims. The aggressive information drive by Cecophil and its partners is essential so as to instill consciousness among industry stakeholders to resort to ADRs and tap its potentials in the resolution of disputes. In the end, the construction industry would ultimately benefit from the ADR in the effective administration of justice in the country.

From viajera to fashion designer

By Emmaruth Gabriel
Contributor

DESIGNS for real women, not mannequins.

ONE DAY TINA NAVARRO AND partner were scrounging the streets of Ilaya, Divisoria for fabric to use for their office wear under the label "Ilaya".

Six months later, the partners found themselves opening a stall at the Metrowalk complex in Pasig city.

"It just happened so fast," exclaims clotheshorse turned fashion designer Tina Navarro.

Ilaya, the fashion badge of most working women these days started from humble beginnings.

Navarro was content with traveling to Bangkok and buying clothes there to re-sell to friends in Manila. A sense of entrepreneurial zeal was nagging at her to have her own line of clothing some day. "When I got pregnant, it became harder to find clothes. I decided to make my own," says Navarro.

"I knew it was going to be a big responsibility, but bahala na," she continues.

Starting with three sewers and a pattern maker, Navarro set up in Taytay, Rizal. "A lot of subcontractors and clothing manufacturers closed down in this area," says Navarro. The cost of manufacturing coupled with the sting of alleged sweatshop operations in the area can still be felt. But Navarro pushed on.

Soon, she and her sewers were turning out cropped boleros, trousers and cropped jackets trendy enough to give sizzle to what women wore to the boardroom.

She started selling to friends who, by word-of-mouth, swore allegiance to Ilaya's trendy and practical designs. Soon enough, Ilaya was in the city's major tiangges. "My big break came when we joined Heaven Sent bazaar at the Fort in late 2004. Stylists saw her clothing line and soon had her clothes in glossy magazines. From *tiangges,* Navarro bet on a stall location in Pasig City.

"At the start, we had zero sales. No one would even go up to the second floor," she confesses. Navarro had to advance a year's rent on her stall at the newly opened Metrowalk complex.

Happily, Navarro reports that today, her signature item, the cropped bolero, is snatched up the minute new stocks are brought into the store.

She has expanded her line to include updated cropped jackets, cropped pants for the summer heat, trousers for the office and trendier clothing options (imagine a princess tee matched with vintage jackets).

Her winning formula? Design for real women, not mannequins." On bulging stomach days, I made pants that would minimize the bulge and accentuate the length of women's legs. Got "thunder thighs?" She has trousers designed to nip and tuck those imperfect parts.

Prices have been pegged so consumers get value for money. A denim bolero would go for P600 while a vintage fabric or brocade bolero would fetch P1,000 price tag. Pants and trousers start at P750. Stylish kaftans can be had at P600. Her denim jeans are at P900.

Navarro points out that she will manufacture only two dozens maximum per design. Her boleros are turned out only a dozen at a time and her vintage fabric boleros, on made-to order and very limited design pieces only." Once I have chosen a fabric design, I only make limited numbers so there is that feeling of exclusivity (sans the expense)," she says.

Textile and garment manufacturing is labor-intensive. For a P10,000 investment, says industry insiders, one can buy a secondhand machine and employ two people to work on two shifts and another two to do other tasks such as cutting, sewing buttons and ironing. In Navarro's case, she had to bootstrap and sporadically purchase secondhand edging and high-speed machines on terms to get started. She now has bought a button machine for P8,000 and an edging machine for P22,000.

From a meager P1,500 weekly take home pay for sewers in the Taytay area, Navarro has been instrumental in upping women sewers' income to P8,000 a week. She humbly says she is glad to help re-develop Taytay's sewing cottage industry. "A lot of subcontractors have closed down in Taytay because labor is too expensive and China and India's prices are not helping," says Navarro.

"After my baby was born, my priorities changed. I no longer shop in expensive boutique stores. Money isn't easy to come by anymore. I just want to give my clients their money's worth," concludes Navarro.

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Editor Aries Espinosa

How low is the lowest in credit cards?

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU had enough for your shopping? With a shoestring budget at today's prices, one doesn't get too far. It is true even with credit cards. When consumers are saddled with prohibitive interest rates, you won't go far with your card purchases, afraid of incurring burdensome interest charges.

So you end up buying less. Either way, owning a credit card doesn't give you the flexibility to manage your expenses, and enjoy the thrills of shopping.

You can kiss your card worries goodbye with East West Bank Mastercard. It's the only card that offers a two-tiered rate depending on the type of purchase. It's your best bet against other high-interest charging credit cards.

East West Bank MasterCard brings a host of innovations that will surely please users, especially individuals and families, who need not dispense life's essential purchases.

It features the lowest interest rate of only 2.25 percent on basic purchases such as medicines, gasoline and groceries. Other cards normally charge an average of 3.25 percent on all types of purchases. Thus, compared to other credit cards, East West Bank actually offers a rate that's 30 percent less on basic purchases.

For lifestyle purchases, East West Bank MasterCard charges only 2.75 percent, about 15 percent lower than other similar cards in the market. So whether it's a basic or a lifestyle purchase, cardholders find enough room to spend more. Thus, they are able to buy more of life's essentials without the burden of paying high interest charges.

In addition, East West Bank MasterCard collects the lightest minimum amount due - only 3.5 percent of the total revolvable balance or P200, whichever is higher. This gives cardholders greater flexibility to manage their debt payments.

East West Bank MasterCard also gives cardholders the longest interest-free credit period of up to 54 days. Members enjoy zero interest from transaction date to payment due date if full balance is paid. Plus, cardholders enjoy a higher cash advance limit of as much as 50 percent of one's available credit.

East West Bank MasterCard also waives its membership fee for the first year. For the membership fee payment, cardholders may choose to pay monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. Billing begins only on the second year.

With an East West Bank MasterCard, you can afford to enjoy life's essentials because you have more room for purchases. And yes, you can start believing that you can go far with your credit card these days!

SMART
PERANG
MA LA

SMART AWARDS WINNERS FOR SMART PADALA-RURALNET RAFFLE
Photo shows (from left) Lourdes P. Bersalote of Smart Public Affairs-VisMin, Richard Co, product services officer of RuralNet Inc, Joy Marie B. Gudes, the third prize winner, Wilbor M. Rondez, the representative of Richelle B. Rondez who won the first prize, Ranulfo L. Subingsubing, who got the second prize and Alan L. Bullo, manager of the Rural Bank of Bantayan Inc-Balamban Branch during the awarding of the raffle winners of the Smart Padala-RuralNet promo held at the Rural Bank of Bantayan-Balamban Branch, Municipality of Balamban, Cebu. The winners received a Smart Nokia prepaid phonekit each.

Mozcom bares turnkey online presence solution

MOZCOM RECENTLY INTRODUCED ITS NEW products aimed at taking businesses online at a very reasonable cost. The NetPresence product line provides companies with a turnkey solution that includes everything from domain name registration, to virtual email, website design, hosting and shopping cart applications with integration to the PayEasy online payment system.

"Mozcom NetPresence is a complete business solution," says Dick Chiang, Mozcom's COO/CTO. "We will take care of everything from domain name registration, to hosting your email, creating your website, and equipping you with full e-commerce capability - all for a very reasonable price."

Businesses can register .com domain names for as low as P800 a year. They can get a professional-looking website for as low as P15,000 one-time, and avail of a very affordable Search Engine Optimization (SEO) service to ensure they get registered with more than a hundred online directories and search engines instantly including Google, Yahoo, Ask Jeeves and MSN Search.

Customers who want to take their online presence further may opt to avail of the e-commerce package. With a small startup fee, business can have a professionally-designed shopping cart application with a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificates. The shopping cart can be easily integrated with Mozcom's PayEasy Online Payment System allowing businesses to instantly accept several modes of payment online including international credit cards like Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover; BancNet ATM card, PayPal, BitPass, Globe G-Cash and UCPB my1Time.

"We also have a special package for individuals who want to get a personal domain name," Chiang added. "For only P600/year, they can register their family's name for posterity - like delacruzfamily.com. Our email forwarding service can forward all email addressed to their vanity domain name to any email address they wish."

Mozcom was established in 1994, making it the Philippines' 1st commercial ISP. Its nationwide pure-IP backbone was the first of its kind, and to this day, provides the infrastructure that runs corporate virtual private networks (VPNs), the campus network of the major educational and research institutions, and provides true dialup roaming for mobile users from Northern Luzon to Southern Mindanao. For more information, visit http://www.mozcom.com or call (02)848-2606.

CPA TOPNOTCHERS GO FOR P&A
Ninety new-hires of public accounting firm Punongbayan & Araullo (P&A), member of Grant Thornton International, are currently undergoing their audit methodology and software training. Eighteen of these new-hires, who are all successful examinees of the October 2005 CPA licensure examinations, are topnotchers. Shown are (counterclockwise, from bottom left) Jericho Naval (2nd place), Edna Lyn Sy (5th), Shayne Laparan (5th), Vincent Bedia (7th), Mark Joseph Rivera (7th), Grace Macabata (9th), Diane Espiritu (11th), Gretchen Villarica (12th), Ian Puno (14th), Christian Domingo (15th), Rowell Umali (15th), Jun Cuaresma and Jessie Carpio (P&A audit group heads), Charlene Asido (16th), Alpha Gandillo (16th), Mia Dilao (19th), Dexter Dela Cruz (20th), and Ronie Guina (20th). Not shown in photo are Minerva Galicinao (15th) and Alejandro Limon (20th).

THREE TIME'S A CHARM FOR MOM'S RADIO
For three consecutive years, Mom's Radio has been recognized for its transformational programming at the Catholic Mass Media Awards (CMMA). Not only that, Mom's Radio bagged its first Golden Dove Award this year. Mom's Radio is an FM radio station that provides unique programming that is dedicated to mothers and women. There is only one station of this kind in the country today. Together with its major sponsor, Wyeth Consumer Healthcare, Mom's Radio provides its listeners with greater understanding and knowledge of matters and issues that would be part of a mother's daily concern and interest. Mom's Radio also received a special citation for Mom's Morning Chat, for providing an innovative and informative morning program to households nationwide. Another special citation was given to the Southern Broadcasting Network (SBN) for providing highly informative and audience oriented programs such as Mom's Radio. Not only did Mom's Radio garner honors and special citations at the 2005 Catholic Mass Media Awards, but has also received the Best Radio Magazine Talk Show award at the 14th KBP Golden Dove Awards. Mom's Radio continues to enrich the lives of women. With a radio station that sends messages that aim straight to the hearts of every home, Mom's Radio will surely touch more lives in the coming years. Shown are (from left) Michelle Dela Cruz, group product manager and Sheryl Ortega, product manager of Wyeth; Leonardo Dayao, Southern Broadcasting Network's chair and Edwin Kuizon, marketing director of Wyeth.

Phelps Dodge Phils launches lead-free cable tray rated building wires

INDUSTRY LEADER PHELPS Dodge Philippines Energy Products Corp scores another first with the launching of its Cable Tray Rated Lead-free Building Wires (PDCT).

Cable tray rated building wires must pass the rigid vertical tray flame test of an independent third party laboratory like the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or IEEE for it to be marked "for Cable Tray use" or "CT".

Worldwide, electrical regulations mandate that only cable tray rated building wires can be used for cable tray systems. In the Philippines, the Philippine Electrical Code Article 3.18 also requires the use of cable tray rated building wires for sizes 50mm2 up to 500mm2 for cable tray wiring systems.

In the case of Phelps Dodge, its PDCT cable is the only building wire in the Philippines which passed the stringent Vertical Tray Flame Test of Underwriters Laboratories (UL) in the USA. PDCT cables are UL Certified and Listed under UL File E 54448.

With lead free insulation, PDCT cables have the added bonus of being environment friendly, eliminating the hazard risk brought about by lead during the manufacture installation, usage, or recycling/disposal of wires.

PDCT has a nylon jacket which offers superior mechanical protection from petroleum by-products, chemicals and termites, and offers greater resistance against abrasion. It also has better gliding capabilities, allowing for greater ease in installation.

Cable tray rated cables are specially designed for installation in cable tray wiring systems, although they can still be used for the regular conduit wiring systems.

Electrical designers and contractors worldwide have been using the cable tray wiring system because of its inherent technical and cost benefits.

Cable tray installations enables contractors and project owners to save up to 30 percent of the cost of electrical wiring installations compared to conduits and other alternative wiring methods.

In addition, the cable tray system is easy to design; allows for easier and faster installation; easier maintenance because it eliminates the risks of moisture build-up and cable damage during installation; and are highly flexible, allowing for future alterations or expansions. This is a very important consideration for industrial plants and commercial buildings, many of which add equipment or expand after a few years.

Phelps Dodge's new PDCT was launched at the PICC during the Expo 2005 of the Institute of Integrated Electrical Engineers of the Philippines Inc on Nov. 22 to 26.

JOLLIBEE, MTV BRING SARAH BACK TO UST
Sarah Geronimo proudly traces her roots and makes a most welcome homecoming to her alma mater University of Santo Tomas Educational High School through MTV Homecoming, the show that follows the country's hottest artists as they take a trip down memory lane to their former schools and 'tambayans'. For the Pop Princess, this meant revisiting old classrooms, talking to former classmates and reminiscing the many happy days they spent in school and at Jollibee. It therefore comes as no surprise that immeasurable joy was all over her face during the mini concert hosted by VJ Claire and Ton of Ideal Minds. Held at the UST – Engineering Complex, the show served as the highlight of her homecoming visit. Done through MTV Philippines and with the cooperation of Jollibee, Sarah gave a fitting tribute to the people who are truly close to her heart.

MANILA WELCOMES BACK GUERLAIN
After being away from the market for a few years, French cosmetics giant, Guerlain Paris returns to the shores of Manila. Last Nov. 17, an intimate cocktail party was held at the flagship counter in Rustans Shangri-la Plaza. Guests were treated to make-up demonstrations by beauty experts: Leo Posadas and Marge Enrique, a flute serenade by Richie Arevalo, and free-flowing champagne from Moet et Chandon. Check out the latest beauty creations of Guerlain at the newly-opened counter at Rustans Shangrila Tower and soon at Rustans Makati (opening in January 2006). Photo shows the Guerlain team.

GENERAL SALES AGENCY AGREEMENT
Pan Euro International vice president and general manager Greenie Dee (second from right) and sales and marketing supervisor Glenndee Pineda (extreme left) sampled Royal Jordan Airlines' vaunted Crown Class service on their flight from Bangkok to Amman for the contract signing of the General Sales Agency Agreement between Royal Jordanian Airlines and Pan Euro International recently. As the new General Sales Agent for Royal Jordanian, Pan Euro will promote the airline's routes, products, and services in the Philippines. Also in photo are Dawoud Mashni (center) - airport services manager for Royal Jordanian and two of the airline's cabin crew.

MRII reviewees soar to the top

THE MANILA REVIEW INSTITUTE Inc (MRII) soars to the top with its reviewees bagging top ten spots in the Licensure Examination for Chemical Engineers held on Nov. 15 to 17. Named topnotchers are: Peachie D. Casinto of University of the Philippines-Diliman, 1st Place; Gemma Louela G. Yalao, 5th Place; Ryan A. Sadac, 6th Place and Ryan R. Alvarez, 8th Place, all from UP-Diliman and Andro H. Mondala of UP-Los Baños, 10th Place. Topping the licensure examination and scoring above the national passing percentage of 48.69 percent with 72.81 percent reviewees passing has defined MRII performance. MRII will start regular review classes on Jan. 9, 2006 for the April 2006 Chemical Engineering Licensure Examination. To assist graduates in test preparation, it has also published Reviewer for Chemical Engineering Licensure Examination, 2nd Edition which features lecture notes and more than 1700 questions and problems. This book is a very comprehensive review material and a supplementary reference to chemical engineering students. Copies are available at all leading bookstores nationwide. For inquiries, visit us at 3/F Consuelo Building, 929 Nicanor Reyes St. (formerly Morayta), Manila or call, 735-0112 to 14 or e-mail at mrii@tri-isys.com.

Your H lth, Y r W
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6TH HEALTH AND BEAUTY SHOW 2005
The 6th Health and Beauty Show 2005 was held last Nov. 4 to 6 at SM Megatrade, Mandaluyong City. The trade show, staged annually by Fiera de Manila Inc (www.fml.com.ph) was participated in by 75 company exhibitors, attended by more than 12,000 trade visitors. The event advocates and promotes wellness, healthy lifestyle, organic and alternative medicine and all about beauty and personal care. Shown during the ribbon cutting ceremony are (from left): Norelyn Babiera, vice president of Fiera de Manila Inc; Rachel and Barney Alejandro (2nd and 4th from left), promoters of Sexy Chef and South Beach Diet; and Imran Er, trade representative of the Embassy of Turkey.

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Aries Espinosa

The similarities of virgin coconut oil and breast milk

IT IS IRONIC THAT THE ABUNDANCE of modern innovations has become proportionate to the increase of health problems and the proliferation of malnutrition-cancer, HIV, SARS, bird flu, Mad Cow Disease, assorted vitamin deficiencies, etc. We expected modern science to eradicate disease - not aggravate it and spawn a whole slew of new ones. We were wrong.

It is in response to this realization that people started going back to basics. Notwithstanding the glutted market of infant formulas claiming to help produce "super babies", doctors worldwide started encouraging breast feeding to ensure that the infant got proper nutrition and that his immune system was strengthened to face modern living. Our own Department of Health has launched a massive campaign to promote breast feeding.

An excerpt from the book of Bruce Fife, N.D., director of the Coconut Research Center and author of "The Coconut Oil Miracle" and "Coconut Cures", states that "...in one study with two groups of low birth weight infants, coconut oil was added to the formula of one group. The group that received the coconut oil gained weight quicker than the group that did not. The weight gain was due to physical growth and not fat storage." Human breast milk contains medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs) and "...these provides an easy source of nourishment as well as protection against infections. The more MCFAs in the milk, the healthier the baby is likely to be... would enhance the protective nature of the milk and provide a high percentage of easily digestible fatty acids that can promote growth and development... a great deal of the nutritional benefits as well as the antimicrobial protection..."

Children and adults who were not breastfed now have the opportunity to boost their body with the same nutrients found in mothers milk. Virgin Coconut Oil, processed properly, contains MCFAs, specially lauric acid and capric acid, which are also found in human breast milk. Drinking virgin coconut oil gives you the energy, immune system protection and other health benefits that an infant gets when he drinks his mothers' breast milk.

The downside to this is that there are many who have a difficult time drinking Virgin Coconut Oil in its liquid form. It is for this reason that Dr. Eduardo Lalusis, a surgeon, known researcher of the benefits of virgin coconut oil and patent-holder for the invention of coco fuel, found a way of encapsulating virgin coconut oil while still using the "cold process" to protect the integrity of its nutrients. Approved by BFAD this year, Dr. Lalusis introduced Growrich Virgin Coconut Oil 500 mg Capsules to the market.

In response to those who think that they might have to drink a lot of capsules to get the benefits of the liquid form, Dr. Lalusis says, " You only need to drink 1-2 capsules a day for prevention and maintenance and a maximum of 6 capsules a day for those with afflictions versus the suggested dosage of the liquid vco of 2-8 tablespoons a day. This is because Growrich Virgin Coconut Oil 500 mg capsules have a higher lauric acid and capric acid content than those in the liquid form. It also has a 2 year shelf life vs. the one year shelf life of the liquid virgin coconut oil. It is the easier way of drinking and benefiting from virgin coconut oil."

Growrich Virgin Coconut Oil 500mg capsules is, to date, the first and only BFAD-approved virgin coconut oil in capsule form. It is available in Mercury and other leading drugstores For further information, please text 0919-587-2237 or 0927-204-0480.

Smart Schools

SMART, PBSP, DEPED TO CONNECT MORE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Smart Communications, the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), and the DepEd recently teamed-up to implement the 'Smart Schools Program', a P25 million program which will improve the quality of public education by using information communications technology and building 13 Teacher Learning Resource Centers and 40 Student Learning Resource Centers in selected public high school nationwide. Shown during the signing of the memorandum of agreement are (from left): Ramon Isberto, Smart head of public affairs; Napoleon Nazareno, Smart CEO; Juan Miguel Luz, DepEd Undersecretary; Jerry Isla PBSP trustee and Christine Joy Javierto, PBSP program officer.

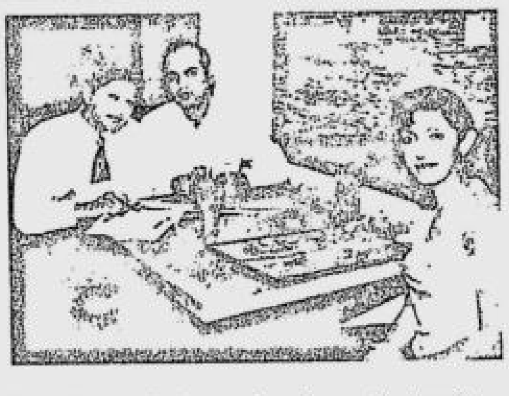
DISCOVERING THE JOYS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

With efforts to play an active role in community service, the management and staff of Discovery Suites has continued its Human Resources program in support of the Sagad Elementary School in Pasig City since September 2002. Representatives from all of the hotel's departments have come up with various engaging activities to benefit about 800 students. Apart from feeding programs and gift giving during holidays and school year openings, Discovery Suites has likewise organized educational and entertaining events such as puppet and magic shows, fun science experiments, and movie screenings. Medical missions have been very helpful as well, and much of this endeavor relies on the generosity and concern of numerous companies, charitable trusts, medical practitioners and individual supporters. Shown in photo are students of Sagad Elementary School in a recent summer activity arranged by Discovery Suites. For more information on how to help support this effort, please call the human resources department at 635-2222.

SAN MIGUEL, UNILAB CONDUCT MEDICAL MISSION

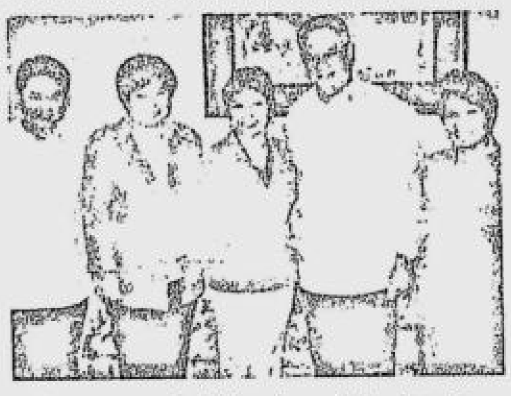
San Miguel Corp and United Laboratories Inc recently conducted a series of medical missions in Binalonan, Pangasinan and Tarlac City. More than 1,000 individuals, mostly children with respiratory ailments and diarrhea, benefited from the free checkups and medicines. Volunteer doctors from the municipal health office and San Miguel's corporate health services administered the services. The medical mission in Tarlac City was done in partnership with the Tarlac Press and the Radio Club Inc.

RLC-HRBD INFORMATION DRIVE AT MASAS



Robinsons Land Corp-High Rise Buildings Division (RLC-HRBD) held its initial market information drive for its latest project, the 'all-loft' McKinley Park Residences (MPR) at Masas. A significant portion of RLC's client base that had eagerly awaited this project arrived in full force and was impressed by the project's location, affordability and other unique features. Photo shows (from left) RLC-HRBD sales manager Richard Predas discussing the project with Indian businessman Ramesh Utamchandani and his wife Shavina. Situated at the Bonifacio Global City and a block away from the world-class St. Luke's Medical Center, MPR is available in one, two and three-bedroom units. Pricing starts from P2.47M with monthly payments for as low as P26,500. Interested parties may call 636-0888 or 0922-838-0888.

NYLIP SUPPORTS NEW INSURANCE COMMISSIONER



New York Life Insurance Philippines (NYLIP) executives recently paid a courtesy call to the new Insurance Commission head, Evangeline Escobillo (middle). NYLIP president and CEO George May (2nd from right) re-affirmed NYLIP's commitment to the Philippine Market and its continued growth. Commissioner Escobillo warmly welcomed the NYLIP team. On hand also were (from left) NYLIP VP and chief actuary Peter Darvin, SVP and COO Marianne Crisol, and (far right) VP and CFO Rebecca dela Cruz.

momentum
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LEVEL UP NOW POWERED BY MOMENTUM

Level Up Inc, distributors of the hugely popular game Ragnarok Online, reached an agreement with Momentum, the activation arm of McCann Erickson Phils, making them Level Up's official partner for all activation efforts. Seen at the contract signing are Level Up's Jake San Diego, marketing communications manager and Shiela Paul, head of marketing with Momentum's Toti Sollongco, managing director and Rudy Villare, business director.

Wacoal sponsors '5K Race Against Breast Cancer'

TO FURTHER ITS CAMPAIGN FOR BREAST cancer awareness, Wacoal recently sponsored another cause-oriented event, the "5K Race Against Breast Cancer" at the Quezon City Memorial Circle. The Fun Run aims to help raise awareness on breast cancer and at the same time raise funds for the Philippine Foundation For Breast Care Inc (PFBCI), a non-stock, non-profit, grassroots, volunteer-based organization committed and dedicated to fighting breast cancer in the Philippines.

Wacoal sponsored its own booth where its employees, dressed in red shirts with the phrase "ready for the challenges of 2005" emblazoned across their backs, helped sell "pink ribbon campaign" pins for the benefit of the foundation. They also handed out flyers and information sheets to participants and guests during the event to help spread valuable information about breast cancer and its early detection.

Toshihisa Tanaka, company CEO and President of Wacoal, led the race around the Quezon Memorial Circle. The act was their simple way of showing appreciation to countless Filipino women who supported the company through the years. It was also an opportunity for Wacoal to involve its employees on civic activities.

According to PFBCI president and co-founder Dr. Cristina Santos, their collaboration with a respectable and socially responsible company like Wacoal is a dream come true for the foundation. With the combined efforts and resources of Wacoal and PFBCI, the more they can reach out to more people and increase awareness about breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the leading cancer among Filipino women today. Cancer experts noted that the Philippines' breast cancer incidence is probably one of the highest in Southeast Asia and other Asian populations. It's comforting to know that in the fight against this disease, there are institutions like Wacoal and PFBCI who are running all over the country, reaching out to more people to spread awareness and hope.

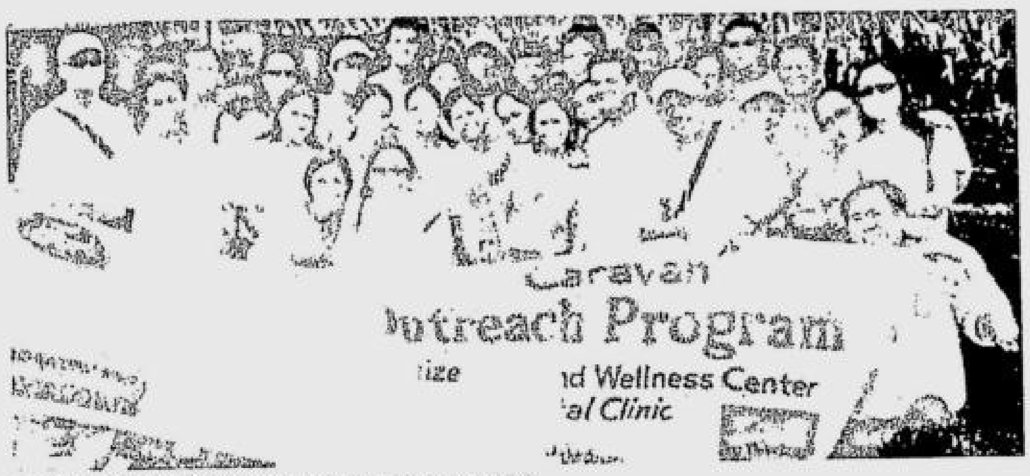
ABS-CBN logistics division gets ISO 9001

ABS-CBN BROADCASTING CORPORATION's Logistics Division was recently certified against the ISO9001:2000 standard that specifies the requirements for a quality management system (QMS) that helps achieve and, through continual improvement, enhance customer satisfaction.

"ABS-CBN is honored to be certified against this standard, as it serves to affirm what ABS-CBN and its employees have known all along – that ABS-CBN is a company that operates under internationally accepted standards," says Raul Echivarre, ABS-CBN AVP for the Asset Management, Warehouse and Distribution Department. "It's worthwhile to note that the group didn't have to change any of its core processes to conform to the standard. Think of our people and our processes as diamonds in the rough. All the standard really did was polish things up a bit and make our people shine." ABS-CBN's ISO 9001:2000 certification was achieved through the help of First Philippine Holdings Corp., Rosehall Management Consultants and Certification International. Echivarre adds that this ISO 9001 certification is merely the first step in ABS-CBN's drive to meet and excel international standards.

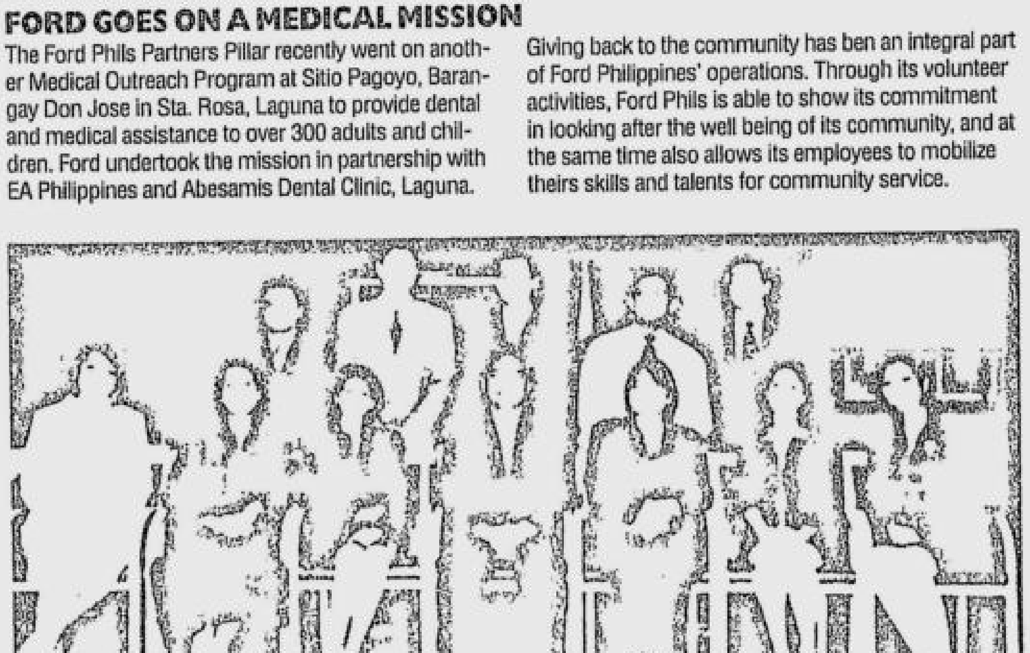
AYALA GREENFIELD ESTATES HOLDS THE 2005 INVITATIONAL

The Ayala Greenfield Estates in Calamba, Laguna, together with The Bellevue Manila, Smart Infinity and Sony Ericsson, in cooperation with Petron Phils., PLDT, French Baker, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, Friday's Resort and Fairways & Bluewater in Boracay, Fuego Properties, Philippine Star, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Palms Country Club, Escada, Titania Wine Cellar, and many more, held the first-ever 2005 Ayala Greenfield Invitational on Oct. 16. The tournament took place at the Ayala Greenfield Estates' newly completed, all-weather, 18-hole championship golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones, Jr. The event also marked the official opening of the Ayala Greenfield Golf and Leisure Club. The tourney culminated in a dinner and awards program at The Bellevue Manila, Alabang, the finest business hotel south of Metro Manila. Shown are executives from Ayala Greenfield Golf and Leisure Club, The Bellevue Manila, Phil Realty Global Marketing, and Jayelles Holdings: (standing) Ador Benito, Edwin Pages, Johnny Chan, Patrick Chan, Dustin Chan; (seated) Ryan Chan, Johnny Litton, Laurent Lamasuta, and Jimmy Munoa.



FORD GOES ON A MEDICAL MISSION

The Ford Phils Partners Pillar recently went on another Medical Outreach Program at Sitio Pagoyo, Barangay Don Jose in Sta. Rosa, Laguna to provide dental and medical assistance to over 300 adults and children. Ford undertook the mission in partnership with EA Philippines and Abesamis Dental Clinic, Laguna. Giving back to the community has ben an integral part of Ford Philippines' operations. Through its volunteer activities, Ford Phils is able to show its commitment in looking after the well being of its community, and at the same time also allows its employees to mobilize theirs skills and talents for community service.



BSP GOVERNOR WITH BANK MARKETING OFFICERS

Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. met recently with the new members of the board of directors of the Bank Marketing Association of the Philippines (BMAP) to discuss various issues and explore possible areas of mutual cooperation in line with BSP's latest initiatives affecting the banking sector. Shown with the Governor are (seated from left) Yolanda Crisanto of EWBC, Ana Belen Castelo of PNB, Leonora Fernandez of the Dev't Bank of the Philippines, Governor Tetangco, BSP's Fe dela Cruz, Joyce Zarate of UOB (secretary) and Therese Arnaldo of IEB; (standing, from left) Paul Olympia of EPCIB, Roberto Banaag of PDB (presdent), Allan John Tumbaga of PSB, Geronimo Diaz of Banco de Oro (treasurer) and Ferdinand La Chica of AUB (vice president). Not in photo is Roni Tapia-Merk of BPI.

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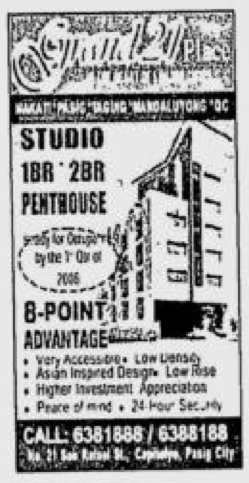

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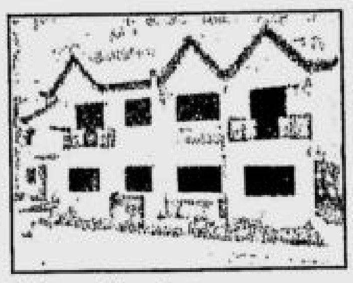

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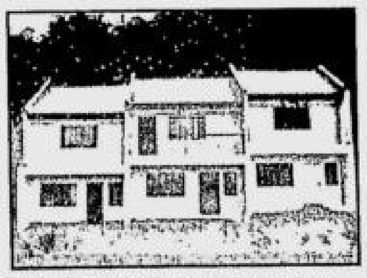

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CITY GOVERNMENT OF LEGAZPI

City Hall Compound, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Legazpi, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) invites suppliers / manufacturers / distributors / contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below.

ITB No.	Item Description	Approved Budget
A.	Waste Collection Equipment 1.0 Two (2) Ea. CAB CHASSIS Forward control, 4x2, 6-Cylinder 4 cycle 2.0 Two (2) Ea. Refuse Collection System and Ejection System to be Mounted on the 15,000 kg. GVW Cab truck Chassis 2.1 BODY VOLUME 13.0 CBM Minimum 2.2 HYDRAULIC EQUIPMENT(s)	P 35,000,000.00
B.	Garbage Bins Materials-Plastic, Fiberglass, Galvanized steel, Sizes- Ranges from 140,240.360 liters, 1.0.1 1CBM Quantity From 160 pcs. to 600 pcs. Depending upon the size of each BIN (vol.)	
C.	TRACK TYPE WADER Powered by 4 cylinder water cooled, 4 stroke cycle diesel engine developing a minimum 100kw Flywheel Power Torque 680 N.M	

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check / Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

Bidding for the above requirement are scheduled on January 25, 2006 at BAC Conference Room, City Engineer's Office, Legazpi City and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the BAC Secretariat, City Hall Compound, Legazpi City upon payment of a non refundable fee of Twenty One Thousand (P 21,000.00).

Interested suppliers are requested to submit their Letter of Intent (LOI) on January 6, 2006 and to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on January 13, 2006 at the BAC Conference Room, City Engineer's Office, Legazpi City.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

CITY GOVERNMENT OF LEGAZPI reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any required formality therein and to make an award to the bidder whose bid is most advantageous to the City Government.

The Chairman
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI – Dec. 25, 2005 & Jan. 2, 2006)

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PERSONAL

Dearest Mumu, Marry me be Christmas! Lets have a baby this New Year! Hehehe! Love Ula

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT
Holy Spirit, Thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me. I, in this short dialogue, want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with You and my loved ones in Your perpetual glory. Amen
Person must pray this for 3 consecutive days without stating one's wish. After 3rd day your wish will be granted no matter how dificult it may be. Promise to publish this as soon as your favor has been granted. MTO

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Joint ECCP – PMAP Forum

GLOBAL COMPETITION, GLOBAL BUSINESS, global teams servicing global clients require changes in the way we run our businesses and how we lead our people. Organisations that successfully reached the top or succeeded staying at the top in a continuously changing business environment have gone through a culture change to become "self-adjusting". How can companies successfully accomplish culture change and what kind of leadership styles could be most effective for companies in the Philippines? This session discusses future-oriented leadership styles for Philippine companies with practical examples. In addition, you will have the opportunity to analyse your personal leadership style and to understand the best practice at the crossing points of Philippine / Asian, Anglo-Saxon and European leadership styles. Constantin Peer founded his own consulting company 16 years ago in Zug, Switzerland. He is an international consultant for organisational behaviour and change management and works with multinational corporations such as Siemens, UBS, Swiss Re, Syngenta, Alstom and SR Technics. He also lectures at several universities and teaches Executive MBA Programmes. He has been a trainer and keynote speaker at conferences in Europe and the US and has published more than 20 articles on topics including corporate culture, change management and leadership. The Executive Forum will be held at the Manila A Room, Makati Shangri-La, Jan. 9, 2006, 8 to 11 a.m. Morning snacks will be served. The fee is P990.00. Payments are accepted at the registration table. This is a joint project between the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) and the European Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines (ECCP).

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"Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God Laid for me.
Lift up your heart and share with me
God wanted me now, He set me free."

ATTY. TIMOTEO J. SUMAWANG

Died December 23, 2005 at the age of 86.

President, TJS & Associates
Founder, Phil. Association of Surety Underwriters

Will be remembered not only as a brilliant lawyer
but for the love he shared with all those around him.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12-G Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be at Eternal Gardens on December 28, 2005 after the 8 a.m. Mass at Arlington.

Message of Thanks

We sincerely thank relatives & friends for all their kindness, expressions of sympathy & heartfelt prayers for the repose of the soul of our dearly departed ~

Valentino "Sonny" P. Barros

Architect
February 14, 1955 – December 12, 2005

Devoted husband of the late Atty. Sonia G. Dipasupil-Barros
Loving Dad of Kiko, Miranda & Leon
Beloved son of Nicolasa Purugganan Barros & the late Santos B. Barros,
Adored brother of Dina & Abe Ellorin, Carmelita & Adriano Lopez,
Benita & David Murrel, Carmencita & Antonia Barros, Cecilia & Jade Presbitero
Ester G. & Oscar G. Dipasupil, Sylvia D. & Johnny Altomonte,
Doting uncle of Nico†, Nichi, Max & Bernard Ellorin,
Justin, Jerrick & Julia Presbitero & Jaime Murrel,
Selina Altomonte, Katrina A. & Jason Sandbach.
Much-loved nephew & cousin of Barros-Purugganan kith & kin

"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except
through Me." **John 14:6**

VIVENCIO Q. PEÑA, JR.

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 23, 2005.

His loving family – wife **Shirley**; children & in-laws **Bubut & Boy, Babette, Bodjie & Christie**; grandchildren **Tin-tin, Nanna, Jessica, Amerlyn, Stevie, Karen & Neil**; brothers & sisters-in-law, nephews & nieces & other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be announced later.

Our Dearly Beloved
PAPA

ATTY. FRANCISCO F. BRILLANTES, JR.

"BOY"

Peacefully joined our Lord on 23rd December 2005 at the age of 67.

His loving family, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (Claret Church), Mahinhin St., UP Village, Diliman, Quezon City.

Interment will be announced later.

His family would like to express their appreciation to relatives and friends who have given their love, comfort and ongoing support so unselfishly in these difficult times.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The DepED-Bids and Awards Committee (DepED-BAC) invites eligible bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for printing, packaging, delivery, storing, and retrieval of Reading Test in English and Filipino for Grade III described below:

Package	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) per Package	Pre-Bid Conference	Bid Submission deadline/ Opening of Bids	Price of Bidding Documents (non-refundable)	End user
Package 1: Reading Test in English and Filipino for Grade III: Printing of Test Booklets, Packaging and Delivery of Test Booklets and Answer Sheets, Storing, and Retrieval of Test Booklets	P 11,525,188.00	Jan. 4, 2006 10:00 a.m. Venue: Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City	Jan. 16, 2006 10:00 a.m. Venue: Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City	P4,000.00	NETRC
Package 2: Reading Test in English and Filipino for Grade III: Printing, Packaging and Delivery of Non-Classified Materials	P 600,000.00				
Total	P 12,125,188.00				

Bids received that exceed the ABC per package shall be rejected.

The Bidding Documents shall be available at the BAC Secretariat, Procurement Service, Room 508, 5th Floor, Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, starting December 27, 2005 upon payment of the non-refundable fee indicated above.

Bidding shall be conducted in accordance with procedures under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act. Information is also available at http://www.deped.gov.ph or www.procurementservice.org or call DepED-PS at Telephone No. 636-65-43 or Fax No. 636-65-42

DepED-BAC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to annul the bidding process, or declare failure of bidding at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected parties.

(Sgd.) ATTY. CAMILO MIGUEL M. MONTESA
Assistant Secretary and Chairperson, BAC

(PDI - Dec 25, 2005 & Jan 01, 2006)

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
KAGAWARAN NG EDUKASYON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Room 507-508, 5th Floor Mabini Building, DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, Philippines
http://www.deped.gov.ph ; deped_procurementservice@yahoo.com
Direct Line 636-6543 Telefax 636-6542
Trunkline 632-1351 loc 2085/2115

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid (Re-Bid)

The DepED-Bids and Awards Committee (DepED-BAC) invites eligible bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid on the following services.

Item Description	Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)	Date/Time		Price of Bidding Documents (non-refundable)	End-user
		Pre-Bid Conference	Submission Deadline/ Opening of Bids		
1. Supply of Services for Comprehensive Maintenance and Support Services for the IT Infrastructure of DepED Central Office	Php 5,400,000.00	January 9, 2006 10:00 A.M. Venue: Bulwagan ng Karunungan DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City	January 23, 2006 10:00 A.M. Venue: Bulwagan ng Karunungan DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City	Php 2,000.00	Technical Service

Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be rejected.

The Bidding Documents shall be available at the Procurement Service, BAC Secretariat, Room 508, 5th Flr., Mabini Bldg., DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, starting on December 27, 2005 upon payment of non-refundable fee indicated above.

Bidding shall be conducted in accordance with procedure under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9184, otherwise known as the government Procurement Reform Act. Information is also available at http://www.deped.gov.ph or www.procurementservice.org or call DepED-PS at Telephone No. 636-65-43 or Fax no. 636-65-42.

DepED-BAC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, to annul the bidding process, or declare failure of bidding at any time prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected parties.

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(PDI - Dec 25, 2005 & Jan 01, 2006)

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Sunday S

Editor: Chelo Banal-Formoso

OFW Christmas

SO MANY TIMES WE'VE HEARD IT SAID that the Overseas Filipino Workers are our new heroes. That without them, this country would have gone under. That in our present, they've collectively hoisted our economy and our hopes. [illegible]

Today being Christmas, we visit with some OFWs to find out how hard it can be on Christmas day when they're far away from their loved ones. And what they tell us confirms what Ernest Hemingway, the vagabond writer, had said: You don't know what Christmas is until [illegible]. Before we all lose it: Merry Christmas from the [illegible]

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ARTHUR Tan

VANGIE REYES

Alone for the h in Central Ame

By Constantino C. Tejero

JOGGING AROUND A STRANGE HOTEL IN Central America is not the Pinoy family man's idea of spending the early morning of Christmas Day. But to overseas contract workers like Rodolfo Navarra, the other choice is to dive into the Pacific Ocean.

Navarra, 47, can now laugh when he relates how he spent the holidays last year.

A marine engineer, Navarra is working for an Italian-flag-carrying, 37,000-gross-tonnage container vessel tramping from port to port across the Pacific (from Japan, Korea and China to Canada and the United States), transporting electronics, textiles and other cargo.

He has been working overseas for 15 years now, so spending the holidays and special family occasions away from home isn't new to him. Christmas, New Year and his birthday he would celebrate with his shipmates by holding a party on board in the middle of the ocean or a drinking spree in a strange city.

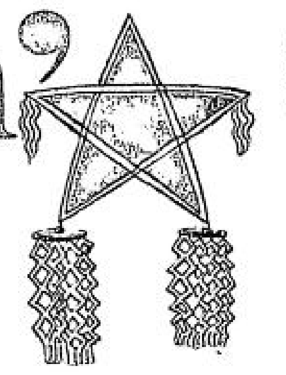
"At midnight, *nag-aagawan na 'yan ng telepono* to call overseas and greet people at home," he says. "Usually we could take a vacation leave long after the New Year *na*."

Last year's was the first Christmas he spent alone. He was supposed to be somewhere else, but he had been asked to be the emergency replacement for another Filipino engineer who suffered from a chronic backache and had to be sent home to the Philippines to recuperate (lucky guy!).

Just before Christmas, Navarra and an Indian shipmate were flown to Panama for their vessel to pick them up. From Dec. 22 to 27, the two had to stay in a hotel in the seaport of Balboa while wait-

RODOLFO Navarra

'Paskuhan' in Taiwan



By Vangie Baga-Reyes

"WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN Taiwan the same way you do in the Philippines," says 52-year-old Arthur Tan, who has been working in Taipei for 15 years as a supervisor at the Ten Dollar Store, one of the busiest shops at the bustling Tonghua Street Night Market in Taipei.

On Christmas Eve, Tan with his fellow Filipino workers at the store, Tony Tan and Zeny Chan, would hear Holy Mass at the St. Christopher Catholic Church on Zhongshan North Road.

St. Christopher is a popular gathering spot for Filipino workers, especially on Sundays, when they get a day off work. The church provides two Tagalog worship services on Sundays. It gathers about 500 to 600 Filipinos on regular Sundays, but the number increases during Christmas.

Next to the church is a plaza where Filipinos gather in droves. In fact, the area takes on the definitive character as Taipei's "Little Philippines." Also in the area are Filipino restaurants and convenience stores selling Filipino products.

"After Mass we eat with our friends in a nearby Filipino cafeteria, or sometimes we have a potluck party at one of our friends' apartment," recounts Tan, who's single and from Binondo, Manila.

"We cook *pancit, menudo* and *lumpiang shanghai,*" Tan says. "*At siyempre pa, hindi mawawala ang* fruit salad. Pinoy food *talaga at 'yun ang gusto namin.* Sometimes we just share money and assign someone to do all the buying and cooking for us."

If they have can afford it, they also exchange gifts. The gifts range from handkerchiefs and socks to food and picture frames.

"*Hindi ka naman malulungkot dito.* Our Christmas is no different from our Christmas back home, except that we are away from our loved ones. We fight our loneliness by being with our fellow Filipinos here," says Tan, who works for a store which sells a great mix of goods, from toys and school supplies to video tapes and house wares, for only NT$10 (P16).

Tan says other Filipinos who work in factories also get to attend Simbang Gabi at St. Christopher, but it's on Chinese New Year that their employers usually give them a couple of days off. "*Mas* holiday *nila 'yun kaysa* Christmas."

No time for loneliness

Erma Calderon Castrense, a 38-year-old babysitter, has been working in Taipei for the past three years. She is employed by a Chinese family in Taipei as care-giver to a 5-year-old boy with a disability.

Castrense says the family treats her well. Every Christmas, the family gives her chocolates as Christmas present.

"They allow me to hear Mass on Christmas Day at St. Christopher and hang out with my Filipino friends," says Castrense, a widow with four kids who are left in the care of her mother in Aurora province. She's been a widow for 13 years now after her husband was stabbed to death by unknown men.

"I go to church in the morning and spend some time in the park with other Pinoys," she recounts. "If I have extra money, we exchange gifts and eat together."

As often as she can, Castrense sends money to her mother in Aurora through "*padala*" centers like Elite. She earns about NT$15,800 or P25,280 per month, but she doesn't get to pocket the whole amount. In Taiwan, about one-tenth of her salary goes to their brokers or agents and about 20 percent of her monthly goes to income taxes. Also, for some workers, a certain amount per month goes to employers for boarding fees.

Castrense augments whatever little money is left after the deductions by canceling her day-off on Sundays. For every cancelled day off, she's paid NT$530 (P848). "*Sayang din 'yun,*" she says.

Castrense sends about P1,500 to P3,000 to her family back home and a bit more during Christmastime for her kids' Noche Buena.

"I know I can't be with my kids during Christmas," Castrense says sadly. "I've worked in Dubai and Malaysia as a domestic helper and I'm used to not spending holidays with them."

She explains she relieves the loneliness by empathizing with other Filipinos working abroad who are in the same predicament as hers. She adds she takes comfort in the fact that, one day she will be back with her family.

With all these thoughts, she says she and the other Filipinos make it a point to celebrate Christmas as joyously as they can.

Filipinos fill the St. Christopher Church in Taipei and dine and exchange gifts in Pinoy restos and cafeterias around the church

A song for Dia

By Alex Y. Vergara

SPENDING CHRISTMAS AWAY FROM home is no longer new to Hong Kong-based domestic helper Emmie Ramal. Before setting foot on the former Crown Colony almost three years ago, the Romblon native had also scrubbed floors and taken care of other people's kids in Singapore for nearly a decade.

"Yes, I was in Singapore when Flor Contemplacion was hanged," says Ramal in Filipino. "I still believe she's innocent."

The smiling-faced Ramal, who is 44 and single, now works as a stay-in helper for Michael and Tina Di Cicco and their grade school-age sons, Dominic and Armando.

Since Tina is also a Filipina, Ramal no longer has to worry about cultural differences. And although Michael is an American, he has lived and worked in Manila for a good number of years.

As in Christmases past, Ramal will be spending the day with 20 or so fellow OFWs in a boarding house that has become a refuge and watering hole of sorts for her and her friends, mostly domestic helpers, drivers, restaurant workers and their spouses. They gather there on their off days and the place doubles as a venue for parties on Christmas and New Year's Eve.

"We chip in for rent of the place all-year round," she explains. They also collect funds for a holiday menu that best reminds them of the scents and tastes of home. Typical holiday fare includes *lumpiang* shanghai, *afritada, pancit guisado, adobo, menudo* and *sinigang,* which Ramal gladly cooks for her friends before the clock strikes 12.

"Just don't ask me to do *laing* and *papaitan,*" she says with a chuckle. "There are more qualified cooks in the group to do those dishes."

Videoke songfest

Of course, what would a gathering of Filipinos be without singing? This year's party is also shaping up as another vocal showdown since one of the event's highlights is a videoke singing contest.

Ramal bagged the top prize last year with her rendition of Olivia Newton-John's "Hopelessly Devoted to You." Not that she's pining for a lost or unrequited love, mind you. This woman has more important things on her mind.

Since both Ramal's parents have passed away, her thoughts these days are on Dianne, her 2-year-old adopted daughter. Even before December rolled in, the doting mother had already sent the toddler a dress, a pair of shoes, Barbie doll and lots of chocolates.

"I sent them through a colleague who's spending Christmas in the Philippines," she says. "I'm saving to be able to go home next year."

Much as Ramal would want to spend the holidays with her loved ones, flying home to their modest house in Bulacan every year would be too costly. The last time she was home was almost two years ago for her daughter's baptism.

Through the years, Ramal has had to comfort

Emptying—a lesson for Christmas

By Grace Shangkuan Koo
Contributor

IT FEELS GOOD TO WALK AROUND with lots of money in your pocket and several credit cards, just in case. It feels good to be known at the place where you work and addressed politely and given a parking space. It feels good to walk past a long queue of passengers straight to the Business Class check-in desk.

To be privileged feels exhilarating, to be given special attention feels great. But, hey, you did earn the money and the respect and did pay for the special treatment.

But if one day your privileges are taken away forcibly by circumstance, say, a coup or identity theft or loss of business, your credit cards are no longer honored, your position in the company disappears and your Business Class ticket is of no use, how would you feel?

Somebody said, without money in his pocket, a man's voice became softer.

Scary

But suppose the privileges were not taken away by force but put aside willingly?

I asked a group of senior women executives how they would feel if they went out of the house in the morning with only a hundred bucks and no credit cards. They said "scared," "no self-confidence" and "it won't happen!"

A friend of mine visits a hospital weekly to give counseling in the charity wards. Her family and her husband's belong to the upper class of the Chinese business sector. Each time she would take a jeepney with just enough money for return fare. She leaves her jewelry, even her watch and cell phone at home, saying a prayer along the way. She says the minute you take off your valuables your attitude changes.

I know a German couple who has been working among the poor in the Philcoa (Philippine Coconut Authority) area. They live among the residents, eat with them, suffer the lack of water and electricity so they will have something to say to them.

As a child, I read the story of an English missionary to India who seemed to have difficulty communicating the gospel to the people. After some time, he started wearing Indian clothes, spoke their dialect, but still to no avail.

One day, too tired from walking, he took a nap on the road side. People noticed his unshod feet—swollen, full of blisters and muddy. Somebody remarked: "He must have loved us Indians so much to choose to be us." Thence his evangelical efforts became fruitful and many Indians understood the love of Christ who came to us.

Stripped

I have been thinking a lot about a particular verse in the Scripture: "Christ Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:6 NIV).

The amplified Bible explains further: "Jesus, who possesses all the attributes of
without grabbing, emptied and str
Himself, divested Himself of all priv
and rightful dignity, so as to assum
guise of a slave and became like men."

As a child, I read the story of "The P
and the Pauper" and felt bad for the p
who put up with all the abuse becau
one thought he was the prince. But it
good to see the pauper experience the l
a prince.

The power and honor and respect
were His naturally, Jesus laid down v
tarily so he could live like us, making
self our Mediator so we would live lik
prince—in eternity.

Richness, power, honor, fame—the
one has of these things, the harder it is
them up. Maybe giving up a portion

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olidays
rica

ing for their ship.

They were not particularly close on board, but force of circumstance made Navarra seek out the man's company. From time to time he would knock on his mate's hotel door to have someone to talk with.

Otherwise, he was alone most of the time. He had nothing else to do but wander inside the hotel, walk around the vicinity, jog along the seaside.

He visited the marketplace to see if he could find something to send home. But he had been warned of muggers infesting the area, so he just stayed in his hotel room most of the time, sleeping, going downstairs only to take his meals.

He used to send goodies to his family through cargo forwarder days earlier, but now he says it's more convenient to just send money order for family members to buy their stuff.

He slept through Christmas Eve and phoned home only in the morning. In a few days, their ship embarked, and he spent New Year's Day cruising the Caribbean.

Navarra says he has grown used to this kind of life, and he isn't as anxious for his family as before, especially now that his only daughter is already employed. When she was little, he had to stop from working abroad and stay home to watch her grow.

For seven years he remained in the Philippines, going into business to support the family. Only when the daughter was in fourth grade did he decide it was time to sail again, while he was still in his prime.

Today, Rodolfo Navarra is spending Christmas Day at home in Perpetual Village in Bacoor, Cavite, in the bosom of his family, for the first time in seven years. Thank God for small graces!

nne

Helper-nanny Emme Ramal plays Santa Claus to her adoptive daughter thousands of miles away

herself with photos of her daughter sent to her by a younger sister, who also looks after Dianne. She also phones home regularly, never mind if what she usually hears on the other end of the line is infant gibberish.

Ramal was beside herself with joy the first time she heard her baby say the word every mother longs to hear: "Mama." The baby has added three more words since to her repertoire: "Mama, please come home."

In due time, child, in due time.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

not feel too bad. The rich give much to the poor! But they also retain much for themselves.

How many of our better spiritual ministers, in their "love of God," choose to go abroad—for better pay, better ministry, better education for their kids, in other words, for upward mobility? Not unlike us, lesser mortals.

The birth of Christ is about downward mobility—completely—down from His glory to live among ordinary people, to be born in the most downtrodden place of all—a manger, to live among the poor not the rich, to work as a carpenter not a pharisee, and to have fishermen for friends, not the educated. That is "Emmanuel," God with us!

E-mail the author at grace@koo.org.

'Balikbayan' Christmas

From page C4

living quarters.

"We decorate our quarters with lanterns, we have *kris kringle*, we have carolers," she says. "I even put up my own little tree."

Even Saudi colleagues greet them "Merry Christmas," she adds. "They also tease us to give them chocolates as presents… Of course, we don't have midnight masses."

On Christmas Eve, Pinoys serve the usual *pancit* and pasta, chicken, lamb and turkey dishes for Noche Buena. "But no pork!" she stresses. "I miss *lechon* so much, and all other pork dishes. I'll have them all this Christmas!"

Poblete says she's also looking forward to the fireworks on New Year's eve, and, possibly, a glass of bubbly or two. Pinoy merrymaking, after all, is never the same without spirits.

"Some make homemade wine because it's quite expensive," she says about Middle East Christmas celebration. Not to mention forbidden. "You get caught drunk outside your living quarters and you end up in jail."

On her first Christmas away, Poblete missed home so much she cried in the solitude of her room. "I felt so homesick," she recalls. It was particularly tough since she couldn't call home on Christmas Eve. "It's hard to get through, so I learned from my colleagues—call before the 24th or after Christmas. And I send money a month ahead."

To fight off loneliness, she buries herself in work during the holidays. Now that she's home, her only regret is that her mom, who passed away last year, is no longer around to spend Christmas with them.

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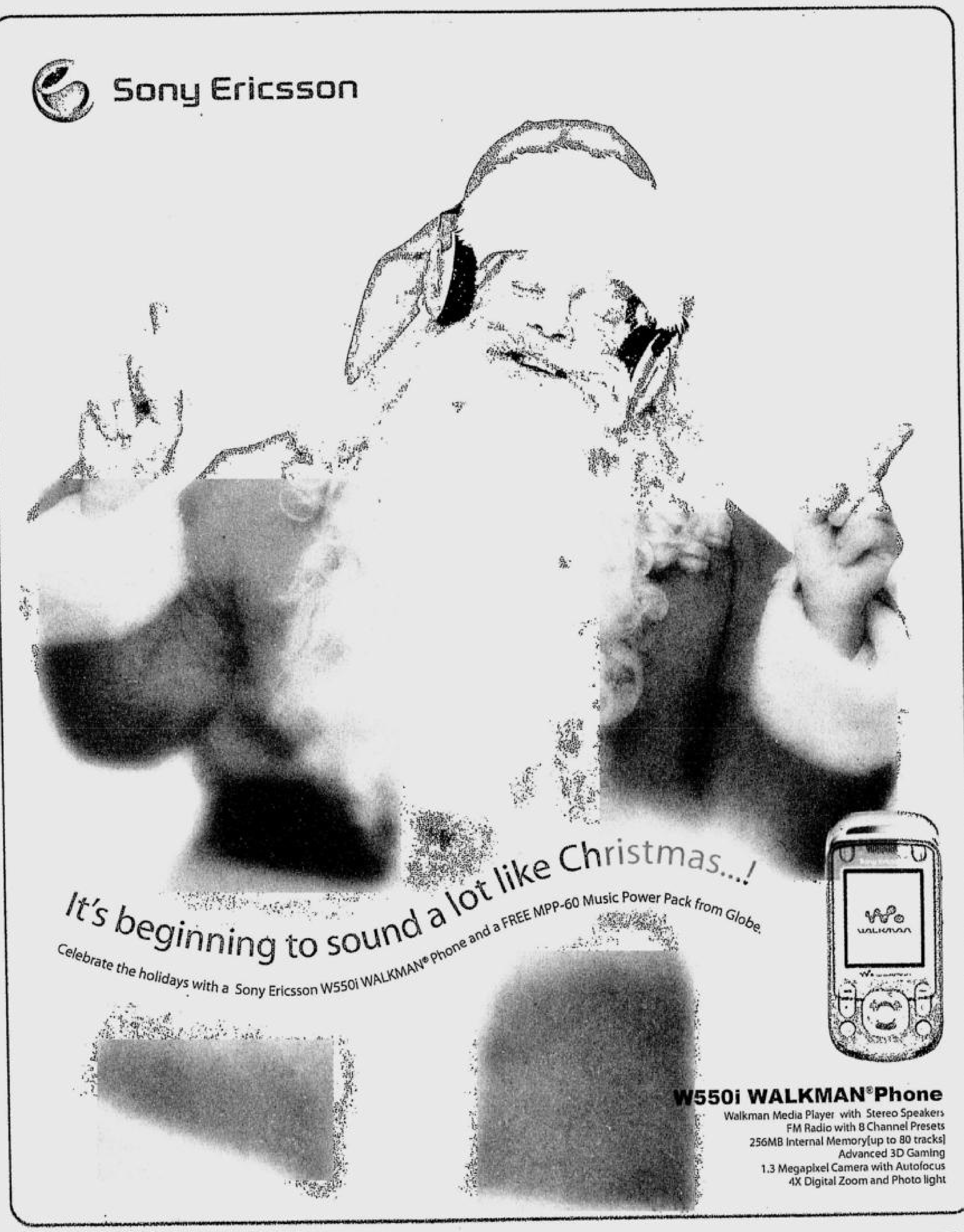

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‘Balikbayan’ Christmas

By Cheche V. Moral

Home from work in the Middle East and UK Filipinos can’t wait to celebrate Christmas the good old Pinoy way

WHAT’S a Pinoy party without *“kodakan”*? Yvette Poblete (seated, far left) with other OFWs in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, at Christmastime

[illegible]

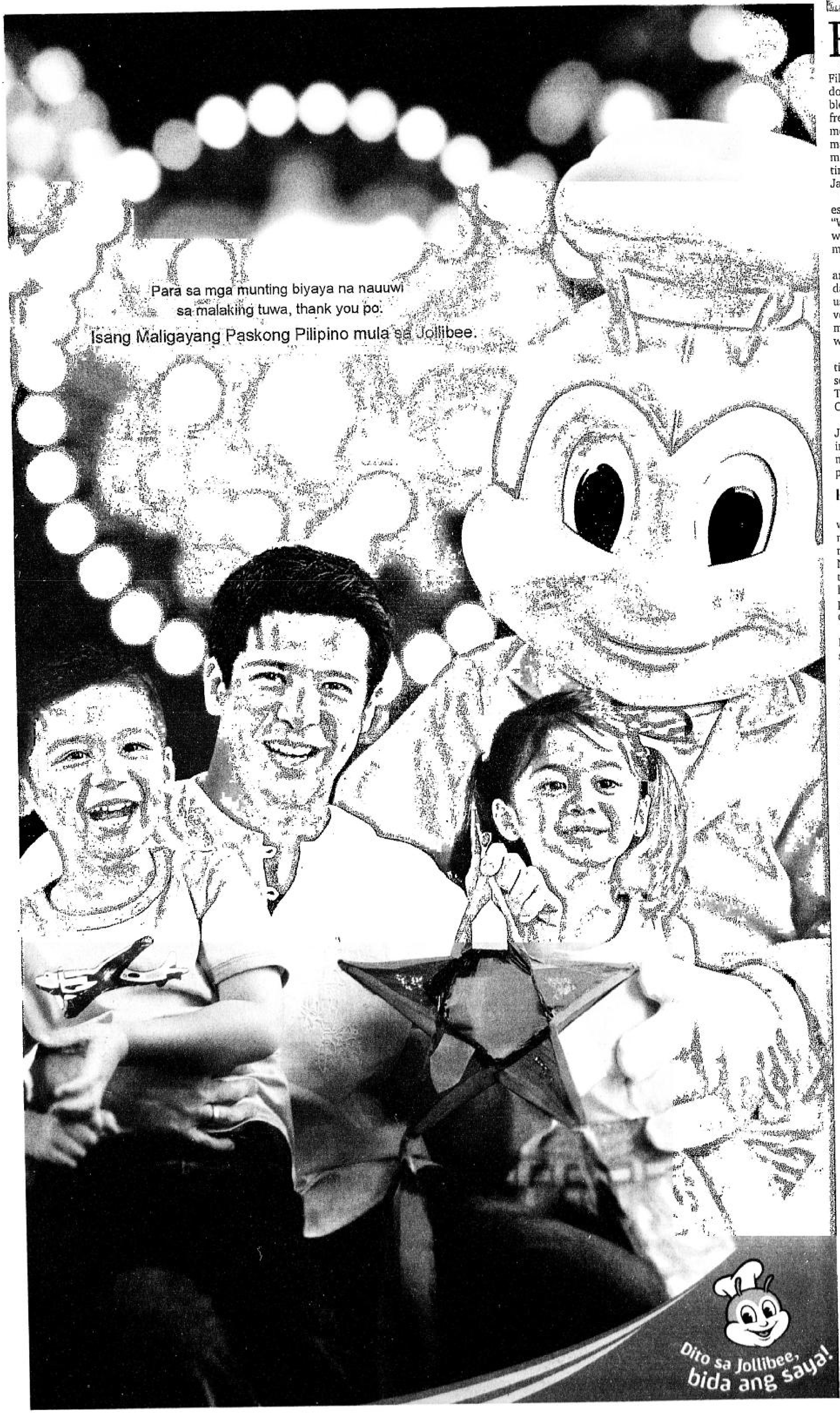
BARRING SOME PERSONAL LOSSES, it will be a merry Christmas for Yvette Poblete this year.

For the medical technologist working in Saudi Arabia, this is the first Christmas she’s home since 2001, and she has already spent a good deal of time shopping for her dad and her brothers. “I missed the Christmas sales here. We don’t have them there,” she says. “I missed home!”

Overseas Filipino workers and the families they leave behind are only too familiar with this situation. But they grin and bear it—all with the thought that a comfortable future will somehow make up for the few lonely Christmases they spend apart.

Contrary to what some may think, Poblete says Pinoys do get to observe the Christmas season in the Middle East—albeit only in their

BALIKBAYAN/ C2



Para sa mga munting biyaya na nauuwi sa malaking tuwa, thank you po:
Isang Maligayang Paskong Pilipino mula sa Jollibee.
Dito sa Jollibee, bida ang saya!

[illegible] UK

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE YEARS, Jeffrey Ong and his wife, Eloisa Fernandez, are home for the holidays.

Since 2000, the Ongs have been among the Filipino nurses working in the United Kingdom. They arrived this month not only for the blessing of the house they had built for Jeffrey’s mom, but also to allow Irvin, their five-month-old son, to experience his first Christmas in his parents’ home country. The Ongs may not be coming to visit again for sometime: they’re migrating to the United States in January.

“It was really hard for us to leave London, especially at this time of year,” Eloisa says. “We’ve already made so many good friends with whom we’ve spent the recent Christmases.”

They recall potluck parties in the UK among Filipino nurses, who prefer to take the day off on Christmas Eve. Noche Buena fare usually consists of *pancit* and other Pinoy favorites. “For *sisig*,” says Eloisa, “we would use mayonnaise in lieu of pig’s brain, so it really wasn’t the same.”

While they observed the gift-giving tradition among friends, the Ongs preferred to send money to their kin in the Philippines. Then there’s the customary overseas call on Christmas Eve.

“We’ve stopped sending greeting cards,” Jeffrey notes. “We just call or e-mail.” He adds in mock dismay that they don’t even get text messages because friends and relatives complain these are too expensive.

In Santa hats

To give the Brits the day off on Dec. 25 which is when they have their Christmas dinner (“that’s ‘lunch’ at 3 p.m.”), the Filipino nurses who took the night off to have their Noche Buena party report for work, where they get to dress up their patients in Santa hats, and serve them roast turkey, Christmas pudding and (non-alcoholic) sherry—all traditional English holiday fare.

“I like to go on duty on Christmas Day,” Eloisa recalls. “Even the patients are in high spirits!”

Unlike her husband, who celebrated his first Christmas in the UK with a British couple, Eloisa never got a chance to observe a typical English Christmas dinner. “But I loved Boxing Day sale!” she exclaims, which falls on the 26th. “I’d take the day off, and queue up with other shoppers. Stuff you bought before Christmas go on sale for over half-off!”

The Ongs had been missing out, too, on the traditional midnight masses, but it was an annual ritual to attend a Filipino Mass on Dec. 20th, followed by a potluck party among Pinoys in the community.

The couple says more Filipinos opt to take the day off on New Year’s Eve so they can welcome the New Year the Pinoy way. “The British don’t celebrate New Year’s Eve like we do,” explains Jeffrey, adding with a grin, “You know how Pinoys love to drink to the New Year.”

Spending the holidays with other OFWs, the Ongs say, somehow made up for homesickness. They say they’re fortunate that, at least, they have each other.

JEFFREY and Eloisa Ong are nostalgic about past Christmases in the UK. But the new parents are happy to say their UK-born son had his first Christmas photo in the Philippines.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2005

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sunday LIFESTYLE

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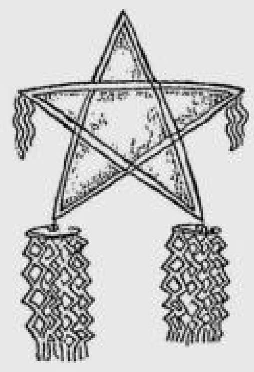
(ABOVE) Christmas party is not just for family but for the Filipino community in Israel. (Right) Children are always at the center of Christmas celebrations.



Pinoy Christmas in the land of Christ

By Ambassador Antonio Modena

FILIPINOS IN THE LAND OF Christ celebrate Christmas the Filipino way in remembrance of home. Like the Jews who were scattered around the world as a result of the Diaspora, Filipinos have fled to richer economies around the world as economic exiles. Like the Jews, too, they hunger for home. Thus, they celebrate the yuletide as a celebration of home.

In Tel Aviv, midnight masses are celebrated at St. Anthony's and St. Peter's churches in Jaffa, in the heart of the Arab community.

In Jerusalem the mass is centered in St. Joseph's church. Haifa's Catholics celebrate at St. Joseph's and Stella Maris churches. The smaller communities in Beersheva, Eilat, Netanya and Tiberias carry out the festivities in their small churches.

Devout Filipino Catholics in Israel are the luckiest in the Middle East because there, they can publicly practice their religion, while those in Arab countries have to worship in secret like the Christians of ancient times when Christianity was outlawed.

The masses culminate in the Media Noche Mass on Christmas Eve, when the churches overflow with devotees. In the spirit of Christmas, the various Christian sects—El Shaddai, Jesus is Lord, etc.—congregate in harmony. While other denominations like the Protestants, the Iglesia ni Kristo, Aglipayans and Seventh Day Adventists do not celebrate the novena evening masses, they celebrate the Media Noche.

Biggest party

In between the *simbang gabi* and the Media Noche, community organizations hold Christmas parties. They would usually rent a large hall to accommodate their members. The biggest party is, of course, the one hosted by the Philippine embassy for leaders of the community organizations, other Filipinos, and Israeli friends.

The Federation of Filipino Communities in Israel (FFCI) would also hold its community Christmas party in the embassy premises. This year, it will have more space as the Philippine embassy is now housed in two buildings.

The exchange of gifts is often the high point of the community parties. Everyone can exchange a gift for a minimum price of NI$100.

But while religious and community organizations are the centers of social events, family and friends are the focus of the Christmas Eve dinner and Christmas Day activities.

Apart from the usual lunches, Filipino groups in Jerusalem would go to Bethlehem, where, according to Christian tradition, Jesus was born in humble circumstances.

The Christmas fare usually consists of staple Filipino dishes, such as *pancit, menudo, bistek* Pilipino, fried chicken, *escabeche, dinaing na isda* (usually bass marinated in vinegar, pepper and garlic), *adobo* (chicken, pork or both), barbecue and pork's head *lechon*.

In most cases, the food is brought by friends, potluck.

Since very few Filipinos have their families with them in Israel, the celebration is held usually by flatmates, a group of 10 Filipinos usually sharing an apartment.

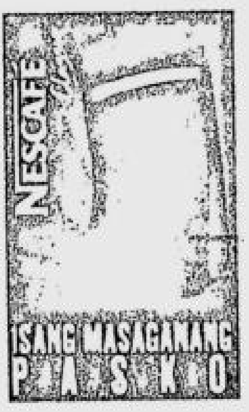
The flats are a unique arrangement in Israel. It's an apartment rented only as a resting area by the tenants during their day-off since most live with their employers from Monday to Friday. The 26-hour day-off usually starts at 4 p.m. Saturday and ends at 6 or 7 p.m. Sunday.

The celebration is also held by groups of two or three flats where *karaoke* singing,

PINOY/ D2

Filipinos in Israel are the luckiest in the Middle East. They can openly celebrate the season

THE PHILIPPINE ambassador to Israel was a journalist writing before joining the diplomatic service. As a career diplomat, he has worked in the country's embassies in Germany and France, among others. Israel is his first assignment as an ambassador.



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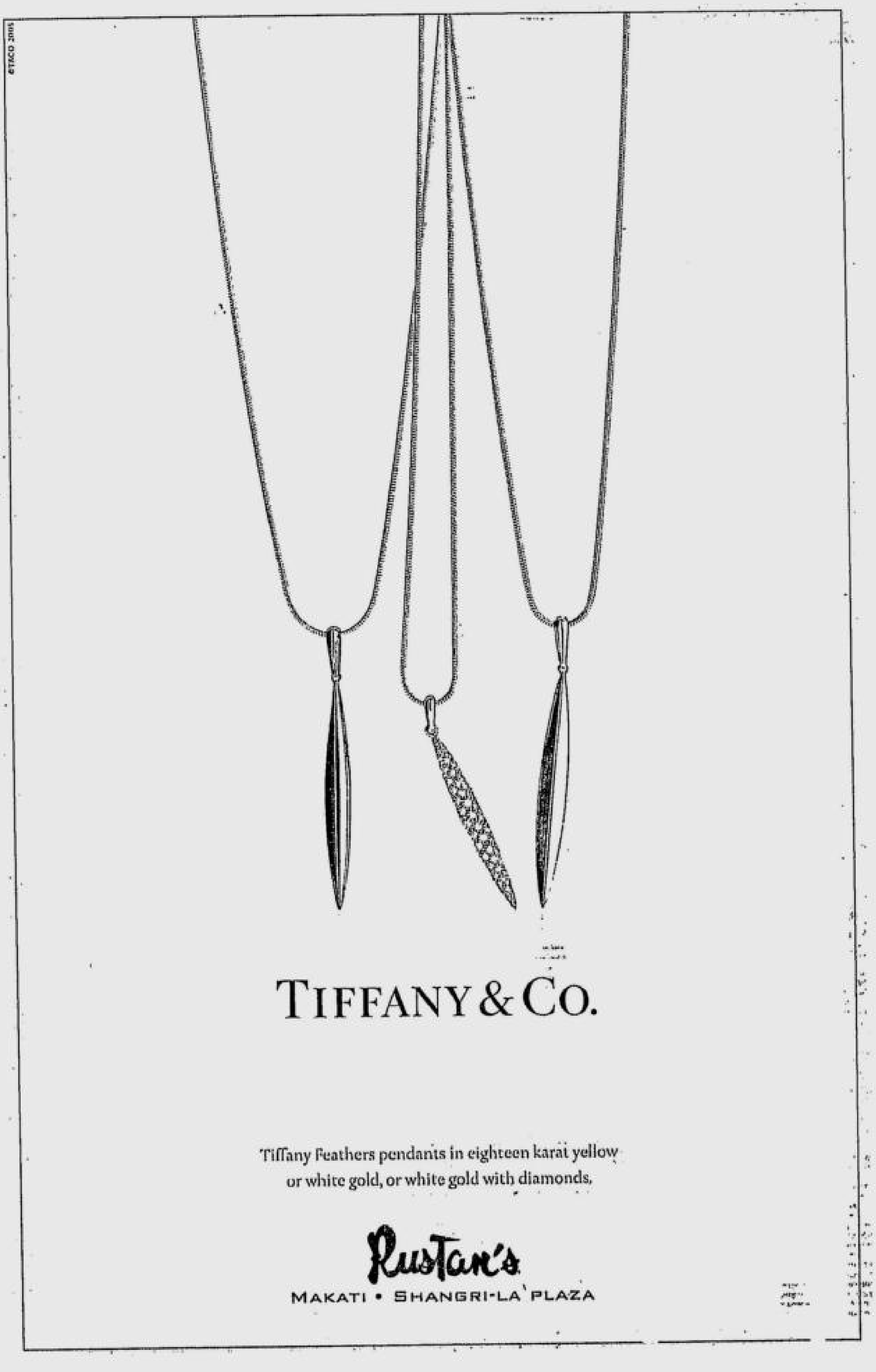
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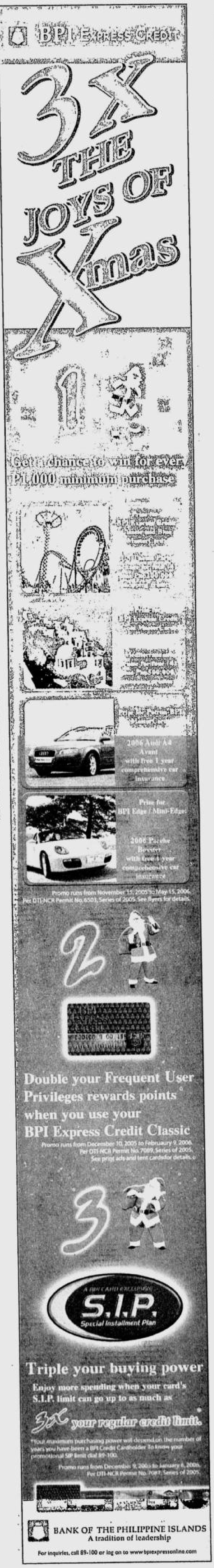
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Feeling 'pasko'

Far away from home, overseas Filipinos try to have as many of the trappings of a traditional Philippine Christmas as they can wherever they may be

By Linda B. Bolido

EMBASSY staff singing Christmas carols for Ambassador and Mrs. Edgardo B. Espiritu and guests.

Midnight Mass in Milan

IN MILAN, THE BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL center of Italy, Michelle Abadiano, a former Cathay Pacific stewardess now married to an Italian, reports that Filipinos also begin the preparation for Christmas when the calendar gets to the first month ending with "ber."

When September arrives, "most Filipinos here in Milan prepare their huge Christmas boxes filled with goodies and surprises to be shipped to loved ones in the Philippines," she says. "Loading these boxes takes up months—anything from bags, shoes, Nutella spread, toothpaste, shampoo. Even the 'panettone' (the traditional Milanese Christmas cake)."

On top of all that, folks back home get cash. Abadiano says, "Cash is sent before September for the Noche Buena. It is sent through Philippine banks or friends who go home for Christmas."

Filipinos may also start decorating their homes for the coming holidays. "For many Filipinos, the *parol* is still the symbol of Pinoy Christmas, representing the guiding light, the star of Bethlehem." The *parol*, if not displayed outside, is placed where guests are not likely to miss it—the *sala*.

After the gift box has been sent, the house is trimmed for the holidays and the refrigerator is filled with food for the Noche Buena.

Abadiano says the last "must-have" item on the list is the international long-distance telephone card. "It is just so tragic for an OFW celebrating Christmas here in Milan not to have an international phone card in his pocket."

A last-minute frenetic quest for the best offer on phone cards begins. The Pinoys call to advice relatives that a package has been sent, then call at midnight of Dec. 24 and on Christmas Day itself, clogging phone lines between the RP and Milan.

Abadiano says the 24th and 25th are the days when "Filipinos here feel most nostalgic for home."

Filipinos attend midnight mass on Dec. 24th then enjoy the traditional Noche Buena afterward with family and friends.

"The Noche Buena is very much like a 'happy hour' here. Family, friends, relatives and Italian neighbors drop by to wish everyone '*Tanti auguri e boun natale*' (Best wishes and happy Christmas). Food is abundant, often served buffet-style."

The Milanese Christmas spread of Filipinos typically includes oven-roasted piglet, *pancit*, rice, *adobo*, cassava cake, *lumpia*, *kaldereta*, *kare-kare*. There is also an abundance of San Miguel beer, wine and liquor.

Abadiano adds that the celebration on the 25th among Filipinos in Milan is usually initiated by the Consulate General, and features local talents, exchange of gifts and, of course, *karaoke* singing.

Alas, with Filipinos having to go back to work right after New Year, the celebration cannot stretch to the Feast of the Three Kings or Epiphany.

CLAUDINE Barretto and Piolo Pascual were OFWs in the movie "Milan."

Never too foggy for simbang gabi

FILIPINOS IN LONDON ALSO TRY TO observe as many of the Christmas traditions as they can, according to Rosario "Chit" Afuang, public relations officer of the Philippine embassy in the United Kingdom.

Simbang gabi is really evening Mass in London, scheduled to coincide with the actual time in the Philippines (eight-hour difference). The time is also convenient for OFWs who work during the day.

So *simbang gabi* starts at 7 p.m. on the 15th and ends on the 23rd. But the series is not held in just one or in all Catholic churches in London. Every day a different church—or two churches—would be the venue for the Mass.

Roland G. Adap Jr., who works with Allied Bank Philippines (UK) Plc, says except for the ambassador (currently Edgardo Espiritu) and the embassy officers and staff, very few Filipinos complete the nine-day Mass because of this.

Afuang says the Philippine Embassy in London spearheads the holding of *simbang gabi*. It meets with the various Filipino community association leaders to discuss the schedule.

She says no evening Mass is held on the 24th "as most families have their own celebrations. Our community in Perivale, Greenford, for example, will have its party in a Spanish restaurant 7-10 p.m. Some 20 families [get] together to celebrate Christmas Eve."

But after the parties, they proceed to the nearest church for the midnight Mass.

CHILDREN'S games are regular features in Christmas get-togethers in London.

Of course, after the Mass, there is another *salu-salo*. Communities prepare Filipino dishes and delicacies. Some even have programs.

The are also the usual exchange of gifts, gift-giving, family get-togethers, etc. The sending of Christmas cards is a tradition still observed by OFWs.

Afuang says most Filipino families have Christmas trees, Christmas lights and other decorative items inside their houses.

"OFWs send cash early, normally two weeks before Christmas for the family back home to buy new clothes, food for the Noche Buena and Media Noche. They call their families almost everyday until they finish the 'call cards' (£5 for 130 minutes). *Magastos daw pag* Christmas but they are happy to hear the happy voices of their loved ones in the Philippines."

One problem London Pinoys have to deal with is limited transport facilities on Dec. 24. On the 25th, according to Afuang, there are no train and bus services at all, only taxis and mini cabs that charge double the usual rates.

Pinoy Christmas in the land of Christ

From page D1

dancing and other forms of revelry are held all night from Christmas Eve to Christmas Day.

Christmas Eve from 10 a.m to 7 p.m. will find Filipinos forming long queues in public telephone booths at the bus stations or the malls. The calls enable the Filipinos to send greetings to their loved ones, receive domestic updates, and accept thank you's for the Balikbayan boxes, cash remittances and other gifts they have sent home.

Party-prone Pinoys

Working abroad can be very lonely. But Filipinos are not a solitary people. They congregate. At the slightest excuse, they would party. Catholic charismatic organizations or revivalist "born-again" congregations have flourished in Israel because they offer a social milieu that provide a sense of belonging to lonely Filipinos.

There are also informal groups, mere gatherings of friends. But all these formal and informal groupings help to form a strong support group that enables Filipinos to survive and endure abroad.

One reason the Philippine Embassy's text (SMS) brigade works so well is the sense of belonging of Filipinos stemming from a solidly united community.

The text brigade enables the embassy to find out if a Filipino is involved in yiolent incidents, such as suicide bombings. Once news of a suicide bombing is reported, Filipinos would text each other.

An unanswered phone or text would be reported to the embassy personnel (the community has the cell phone numbers of everyone in the embassy—from the ambassador to the lowest ranking clerk), which then triggers the embassy to dispatch its hospital team to check the hospitals while another team goes to the bombing site to find out if a Filipino has been injured.

Like the Jews in their Diaspora, the Filipinos have learned to draw from the resources of their faith and identity to endure and prevail in foreign countries. And because they work in the Holy Land, Christmas for them is doubly significant.

As Filipinos, they may heartbreakingly miss home, but as Christians, they know that Christ, whose earthly life was centered in Israel, is with them, providing them a feel of home. And they really work hard to foster unity because of their belief in Christ's promise: "Whenever two or more are gathered in my name, I am there."

OH WHAT A HOLIDAY. (Above) Filipinos don't wait for dusk to start the dancing. Even Santa Claus gets to groove. (Below) Christians of all denominations sing together in the spirit of the season.

SIX LUCKY shoppers can win trips to Disneyland Hong Kong for four days/three nights.

Shop and fly to HK Disneyland

SHOPWISE CAN HELP MAKE children's dream of visiting Disneyland come true this Christmas.

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The Magic Pass promo is open to all customers 18 years old and above. Shoppers get one raffle coupon with every single receipt purchase of P500, inclusive of P100 worth from participating sponsors.

Customers only have to present their receipts at the redemption booth of the branch where purchases were made. Wise Card Members get to triple the total number of their raffle coupons.

Entries may be dropped in marked boxes in Shopwise branches. Deadline for submission of entries is 11 p.m., Jan. 4, 2006. At 4 p.m., Jan. 6, the six lucky winners will be drawn simultaneously in Shopwise branches.

Only one customer can win in each Shopwise branch. A winner in one branch is no longer eligible for the prize in another outlet. All winners will be notified via registered mail and telephone. Prizes are tax-free.

Shopwise is at G/F, Harrison Plaza Mall, Manila; M.L. Quezon Ave. cor. Circumferential Rd., Antipolo City; G/F Festival Supermall, Alabang; corner Pasong Tamo and Vito Cruz Sts., Makati; E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Bagumbayan, Libis, Quezon City; and corner Gen. Aguinaldo and McArthur Avenues, Araneta Center, Cubao, Quezon City.

Christmas comes to Solana

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Darang

THE 20,000 RESIDENTS OF 16 BARANGAYS in Solana, Cagayan, can finally celebrate Christmas in a small chapel near their homes after the archdiocese of Tuguegarao created the Holy Family parish with young Fr. Manuel Catral as parish priest.

Mostly farmers, some of them are now undergoing Basic Ecclesial Formation to prepare them for functions in church. Christmas became more meaningful to them when Guada Bautista donated two and a half hectares of land where a big church, the *convento* for the priest and the Basic Ecclesial Center will be built.

Father Catral currently lives in a small hut near the chapel.

Holy Family parish belongs to the Vicariate of Piat and is located between Solana and Piat. The people can speak Ilocano, Ibanag and Itawes. Those who wish to help build the church can text Father Manny at 0920-9135437. Thank you for your kindness.

Subsidy

The Kannawidan Foundation composed of sons and daughters of Ilocos Norte is giving thousands of elementary school children in public schools the opportunity to know their heritage by subsidizing the entrance fee to the Museo Iloco.

In its 14th-anniversary celebration at the Wack-Wack Country Club, the group invited Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte, an Ilocano from Sarrat town, as guest of honor.

Child feeding

Martin Lopez, through his art company, organized recently a concert featuring two children's choirs at the Holy Trinity Church to raise funds for the Kabisig ng Kalahi feeding programs. The Kabisig, where Vicky Wieneke is among those in the forefront, has been conducting 250 feeding programs in Metro Manila and the provinces since 2001.

It is also working with the Rotary Club of Makati in its primary complex (tuberculosis) prevention program.

Charity work

Odelia Arroyo, who was invested recently as "Dame of Magistral Grace," together with Josie Padilla-Rufino and Alice Tesoro-Guerrero, at the Sanctuario de San Antonio emphasized in her speech the work for the poor of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Ody Arroyo said, "Today, we begin our spiritual journey, as we pledge ourselves to defend the church and to care for the sick and the poor with all our strength and dedication. The year of spiritual formation, of hospital and care institute visitations, and of charitable activities have deepened our resolve to be worthy members of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta... who would not feel compassion for lonely children without family and home at the Sagip Kabataan, or grief for the aged and dying at Mother Teresa's Home for the Old and the Dying, and awe at the courageous cancer-stricken children at the PGH (Philippine General Hospital), who reach out to us, not with saddened eyes, but ethereal smiles."

Blessed house

Bro. Cesar Talucod is still trying to build the house for the elderly which he calls "Tahanang Pinagpala" in Agoo, La Union. Located on Doña Tiburcia Aspiras St. in Barangay San Antonio, the temporary shelter is a small cottage of four rooms.

One of its residents is Lola Katherine Tolen who is looking for her son, Ronald Lincoln. Those who know Ronald can text Brother Cesar at 0917-7959565. Those who want to help build the house can text the same cell phone number.

Caring sisters

Caring for the elderly in need and bringing joy to the lonely and the suffering is the charism of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The order opened recently a house for the elderly on Lancaster corner F.B. Harrison St., Pasay City.

To learn more about them, write to Little Sisters of the Poor at 601 Maiden Choice Lane, Baltimore, MD 21228, United States.

Ruby anniversary

Bishop Teodoro Bacani, Msgr. Roberto Espenilla and Msgr. Sabino Vengco celebrated recently the Ruby Anniversary of their priesthood, 40th year, at the Paco Church with friends, relatives and parishioners of Paco whom Bishop Bacani served as parish priest for 11 years. Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales was main celebrant and homilist.

Pray, pray, pray

Filipino visionary Nora Ilagan encourages us to constantly pray, "Jesus Crucified, cover our country with your Precious Blood."

To get free copies of the Prayer Power of the Philippines booklet, please call 853021 from 9 a.m. or write to her at 25 San Gregorio St., Magallanes Village, Makati City. Please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.

We're 18

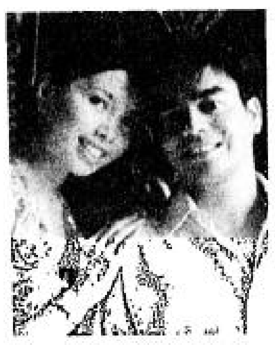
This column is now 18 years old, thanks to you readers from all over the Philippines. You inspire me with your letters of encouragement. Even people from abroad read me as shown by e-mail messages I receive.

When someone from Mexico City read my column on the Nuestra Señora de la Verdad, Justicia y Sanidad, he sent a text message to Boy Bonce asking for prayer copies. Another reader from Santiago, Chile, sent a text message inviting Boy to Chile next year.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year of good health. This is my wish for you. To continue the good you are doing, please tell yourselves everyday, "Lord, let me be a blessing to someone today."

Milestones

We welcome announcements of weddings and engagements. Submit names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, and gown designer along with a photo of the couple and a sketch of the bridal gown, if any, to the INQUIRER, P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City. E-mail to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. A photo of the bride and groom is required if the wedding has already taken place. Announcements will be printed depending on space availability and at no cost to the senders.



ALMAZAN-LADUB

Toffer Almazan will marry **Ada Ladub** at 2 p.m., Dec. 28, at the San Sebastian Parish Church in their hometown of Lumban, Laguna. Almazan is the son of Capt. and Ms **Edilberto Almazan** while Ladub is the daughter of engineer and Ms **Ricardo Ladub**. The groom's uncle, Fr. **Cielito Almazan**, will officiate. The bride will wear a spaghetti-strapped off-white gown by **Jontie Martinez**. Reception will follow at the Caliraya Springs Golf and Country Club in Cavinti, Laguna.

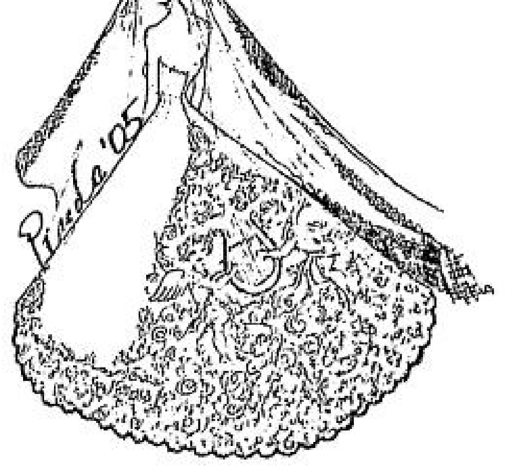
GUBAT-REYES

Arishiell Reyes, daughter of **Antonio** and **Liwayway Reyes**, will marry **Brian Gubat**, son of Capt. **Carlos II** and **Leilani Gubat**, on Dec. 30 at the Coconut Palace lawn, Cultural Center of the Philippines complex.

Reception will follow at the poolside of the same venue.

Eric Pineda designed the bride's gown using ivory silk and duchesse satin.

Pineda also designed the bridal entourage's gowns of plaid Indian silk, wine red taffeta and silk chiffon.



The Holidays are a time for togetherness and the gurgle of children's laughter. Sadly, countless families are being deprived of these joys by a killer – the traitor disease known as IPD.

Invasive Pneumococcal Disease or IPD claims the life of a child every minute. Close to a million babies are lost each year, many of them, less than two years old.

It strikes without warning. What may appear to be a simple cough can turn deadly in just 48 hours. Those who do survive suffer breathing disorders, mental retardation or deafness.

But, there is hope. Ask your doctor about the IPD vaccine. A little knowledge, and the gift of prevention by immunization are all it takes to protect your child from this traitor. Protection he will have for many years – and many Christmases – to come.

This Christmas, the greatest gift you can give your child is long-term protection from IPD.

Ask your doctor about the IPD vaccine.

Wyeth

ipd
Invasive pneumococcal disease

☐ Yes, I want to know more about IPD. Please send me more information.

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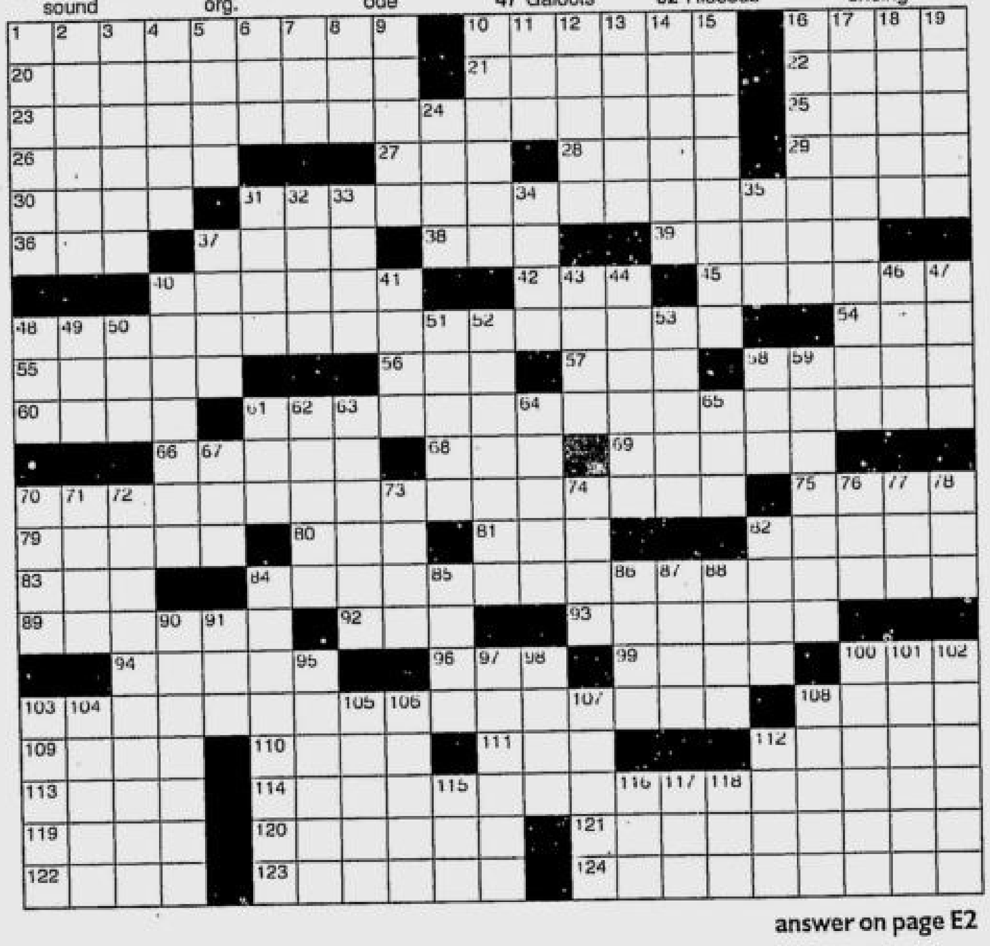
1 Most elegant
10 Ukraine port
16 Socialite Maxwell
20 Directional PC key
21 Fossil fuel freighter
22 Actor Neeson
23 Fiendish females' immunity triggers?
25 Sea-green
26 Bathsheba's husband
27 Scottish refusal
28 Adams or Falco
29 Lays (down)
30 Card pack
31 Racketeer's single-piece wear?
36 Positive vote
37 Test-drive car
38 Ninny
39 Carried on
40 Ventilate
42 Sigh in a hot tub
45 Affectedly refined
48 Actor Clooney's ill temper?
54 Stun gun sound
55 Doesn't include
56 78-Down, in Dijon
57 Certain dir.
58 Vex
60 Lead-in for sci or grip
61 Joshing occupies one's full attention?
66 Will
68 "... — iron bars a cage"
69 See 6-Down
70 Broadway actors' entry points?
75 Approve
79 Titled women
80 Hit CBS series
81 I, to Freud
82 Combine
83 Figure skater Midori
84 Stockpiles car motors?
89 "Later on"
92 Moniker, in Metz
93 Anderson of "Baywatch"
94 "— Johnny!"
96 Flat-fixing gp.
99 Occupied
100 Ephedra-banning org.
103 Show disdain for saturation?
108 Gator's kin
109 Part of speech
110 D.C. VIPs
111 An Ivy Leaguer
112 "Rats!"
113 Horned goddess
114 Holiday phrase anagrammed seven times in this puzzle
119 Pub portion
120 "Java" trumpeter
121 The Philippines are part of it
122 Consequently
123 Dogmas
124 Says another way

DOWN
1 Overcast
2 Stowe villain Simon
3 Ghana locale
4 T-bone, e.g.
5 Waistband
6 With 69-Across, taxpayer's dread
7 Before, in an ode
8 Sea call
9 Banjo sound
10 Quartets doubled
11 "— know you?"
12 Rarin' to go
13 Klondike transports
14 First-born
15 Ammo dumps
16 Ticked away
17 Thaws
18 Pan-fry
19 Pile up
24 Columbia's org.
31 Richard of "King David"
32 Andy's buddy
33 Part of speech
34 Morales of movies
35 Zsa Zsa's sis
37 Uses a trowel
40 Theatrical entertainer
41 New Mexico ski spot
43 Poet Bradstreet
44 Salon dyes
46 Humorist Barry
47 Galoots
48 Gp. symbolized by an elephant
49 Wacky comic Philips
50 Black gold
51 Bringing action against
52 Cassiterite and stannite, e.g.
53 Seamless transition
58 Luau paste
59 Tallinn's land
61 Label
62 Vote into office
63 Pop singer Moyet
64 One of the Allman Brothers
65 Ave. crossers
67 Includes
70 Norse god
71 Peace-keeping gp.
72 Suppressing
73 Robert De —
74 Daytime drama
76 Flesh and blood
77 Gormandized
78 "Sure thing!"
82 Hideous
84 Curses out
85 Webzine
86 The Lone Ranger, a.k.a. "Kemo —"
87 Down Under birds
88 Monster's loch
90 Can't help but
91 Hockey's Bobby
95 TV's Remington
97 Middlemen
98 Suffers
100 Fern leaves
101 "— Howser, M.D."
102 Plays the role of
103 Steal
104 Military denial
105 Braves pitcher Warren
106 Actor Davis
107 Neighbor of Chad
108 Neighbor of Vietnam
112 To-do
115 Lunch leftover
116 Charlotte of "The Facts of Life"
117 Psychic gift
118 Archaic verb ending



answer on page E2

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SOLOMON-RAZ

Kenneth John B. Solomon, son of **Peter** and **Ofelia Solomon** (†), will wed **Rhivanette Chilyn M. Raz**, daughter of **Horencio** and **Evelyn Raz**, at 3 p.m., Dec. 30, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Shrine, New Manila, Quezon City.

Reception will be held at Gazebo Royale, Phoenix Avenue.

The bride's gown was designed by **Ernie Villamin**.

Her ex won't let go

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcelo

DEAR EMILY,

I'm so confused I don't know where to start. I'm a 27-year-old single mom.

My daughter is four and I have a boyfriend who is three years younger than I. We've been together 11 months now. He left for the United States three months ago to work and hopefully save up and to bring us there. I live with my parents as I am unemployed right now.

My problem is my ex-boyfriend. Our story is so complicated. All I know is that I loved him so much once but he took me for granted.

Now that I've moved on, he can't accept it. He's been telling people that I'll go back to him because my long-distance relationship with my present boyfriend won't work.

But after what I've gone through with him that almost cost me my life, I have no plans of ever going back to him even if my current relationship doesn't work. *Pero*, God willing, I hope it does.

My problem is my ex calls me and keeps in touch with his daughter. At first, I allowed him even if it hurt my boyfriend.

I thought that was the right thing to do. She is, after all, his daughter even if he isn't worthy to be called her father. But I was dead wrong.

One time, when my boyfriend and I picked up my daughter after she spent time with him, he attacked my boyfriend from behind. From then on, I cut all communication with him.

Am I doing the right thing keeping my daughter away from her father although he was never a father to her? It is an issue between my boyfriend and I that I am allowing my ex to see his child. I don't want her to grow up with hatred in her heart. But, during their last conversation, I sensed my baby didn't even remember him anymore.

I only want the best for her.

LOST SOUL

When you said he wasn't worthy to be your daughter's father, did you mean he just donated his sperm and did nothing else besides? Aside from visiting his daughter and making your life miserable, is there anything substantial he is doing for the two of you—at all?

Does he give your daughter allowance for food, clothing and medical expenses, at least? If so, how often? If not, why in heaven's name not? Does he think that cooing and holding and kissing her are all that matter between father and daughter?

Your description of this sperm donor of a boyfriend is so sketchy. Is he working at all? What is his civil status? Is he married? Is he even of legal age or stable mentality? Is his name on the birth certificate of the child? Are you and your daughter accepted or known by his side of the family?

It's important to take these issues into consideration. If he is a bum and can't hold a job, then his aggression toward your boyfriend is due to envy. He had his chance for a life with you and your daughter and he blew it to kingdom come. If he has a job but is married and with hungry mouths waiting to be fed, it is still envy of your relationship with your single boyfriend that is causing him to behave this way.

It is practically a lose-lose situation you have with him.

If there are legal questions that have to be resolved, consult a lawyer. In the meantime, if he insists on seeing the child just to spite you, allow him limited visitation rights in your house under the supervision of an adult, if you refuse to see his face at all.

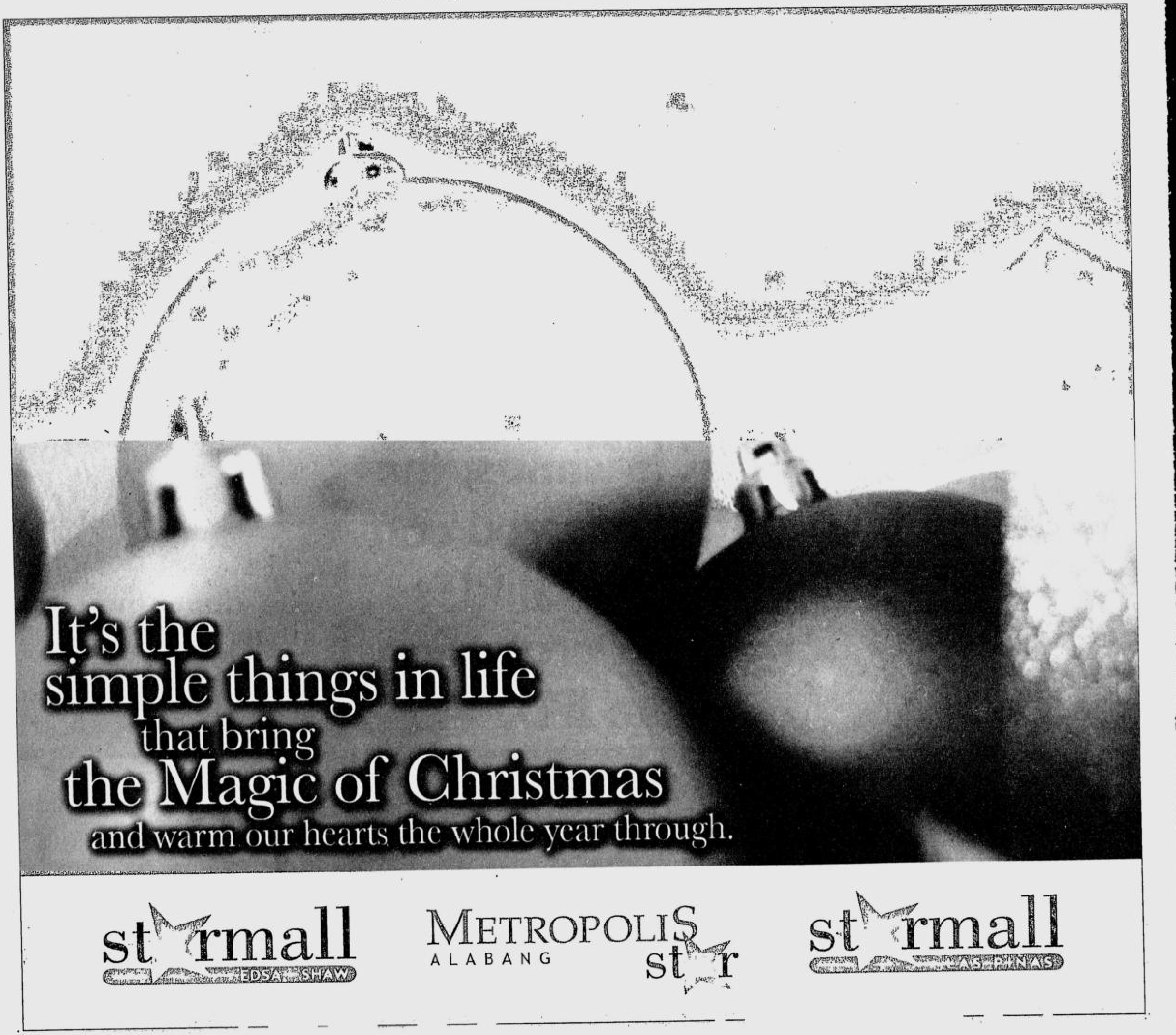
Make sure that when he takes the child out of your house, a chaperone goes along. We've heard of parents kidnapping their kids. It's better to be safe than sorry.

Whether your daughter will hate her father when she grows up is really all up to you. She is too young at this age to harbor any ill will toward him.

However, if he insists on being a creep and making your lives miserable by going in and out of your child's life without walking his talk, then I suppose you'll have to do what you have to do. But if he is really sincere in doing his paternal role, I suppose you'll have no recourse but to be civil to him for fulfilling his obligations.

Now you know. Nothing is as terrible as raptured love that turned sour. Make sure your relationship with your new boyfriend isn't just a flash in the pan.

E-mail the author at emarcelo@inquirer.com.ph, subject Lifestyle, or send your letters to INQUIRER. *Listen to Ms Marcelo co-host the program "Kalikasan Vigilante," 7:15-8:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, on dwBR 104.3 FM.*


It's the simple things in life that bring the Magic of Christmas and warm our hearts the whole year through.

starmall EDSA SHAW

METROPOLIS ALABANG star

starmall LAS PIÑAS

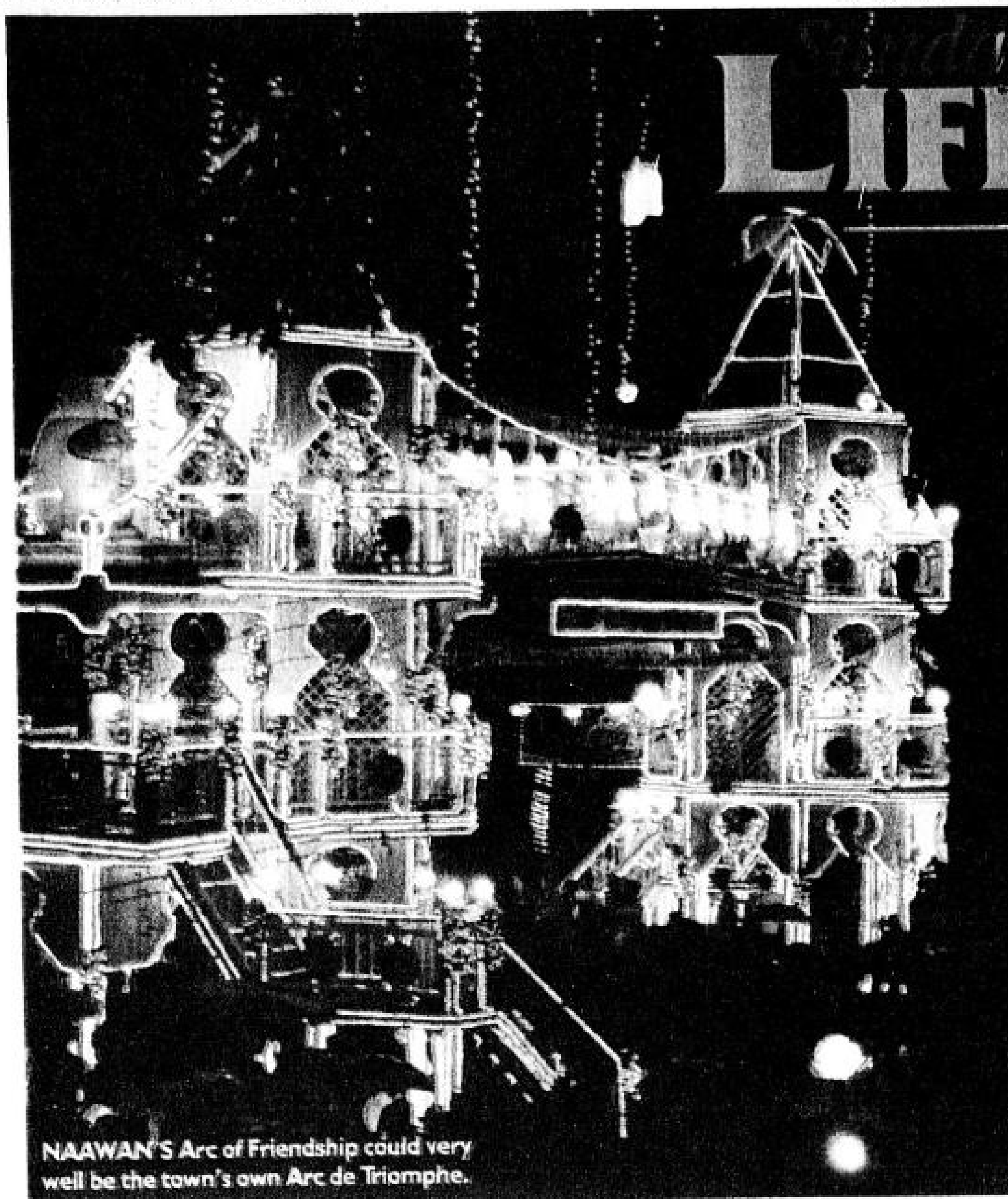
Sunday LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

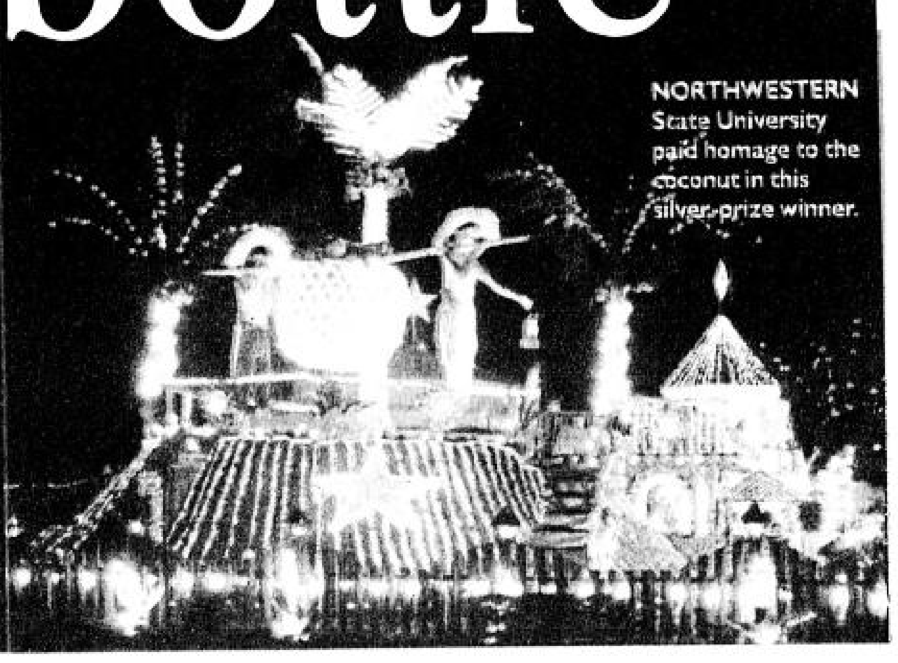
Text us your feedback:
inquirer life name/age/city/message to
2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Christmastime in a bottle

Unilever's new competition inspires teamwork and brings out the best in people of southern Philippines



NAAWAN'S Arc of Friendship could very well be the town's own Arc de Triomphe.



NORTHWESTERN State University paid homage to the coconut in this silver-prize winner.

Text and photos by Linda B. Bolido

THE LADY'S CHOICE HAS BECOME THE people's, too, as more than a hundred communities throughout the Philippines rallied around the new square glass jar of the popular mayonnaise brand of consumer product manufacturer Unilever.

The new Lady's Choice bottle for mayonnaise and sandwich spreads became the symbol this Christmas of bayanihan, an increasingly endangered Filipino tradition. From the northernmost province of the country, Batanes, to the heartland of Mindanao, entire towns and cities worked together for weeks to come up with their entries to Unilever's Christmasterpiece: Bayanihang Pasko 2005, the first of what will be an annual competition for the best holiday season emblem that a community could produce through teamwork.

The rules were simple. Among others, participants had to form themselves into teams of at least 10, use a minimum of 400 new Lady's Choice bottles, and the resulting structure should be not less than 5 feet tall. When the dust settled, rather after thousands of bottles had been emptied, the modest town of Naawan in Misamis Oriental, halfway between the capital Cagayan de Oro and Lanao del Norte's Iligan City, emerged victorious as the "Most Creative" Town or City.

The municipality of 17,000 built the Arc of Friendship over the main highway, consisting of two towers with a [illegible] bridge linking both parts. The Arc of Naawan, as Mayor Dennis Roa called it, could very well be the town's own Arc de Triomphe. Though it did not cost as much to build nor would it last as long as the Paris landmark (entries must be left intact until Jan. 15), the bamboo-and-bottle [illegible] for the town at least P1 million in prize money (there were additional prizes in cash and kind).

Naawan edged out Tangub City in Misamis Occidental, which had been dubbed the Christmas Symbols Capital of the Philippines. In fact, almost every town and city in Mindanao that participated in the contest knew Tangub would be a formidable opponent. The city had been into the Christmas business for 13 years, its festivities endorsed by the Department of Tourism.

Tangub did win a silver and a bronze for two of its seven entries.

Roa had the help of a former advertising man and a [illegible] son of Naawan, Bai Manginda, in conceptualizing the award-winning arch. With the prize money, the mayor said he would set up a creativity center that would train people, particularly out-of-school youth, in livelihood activities.

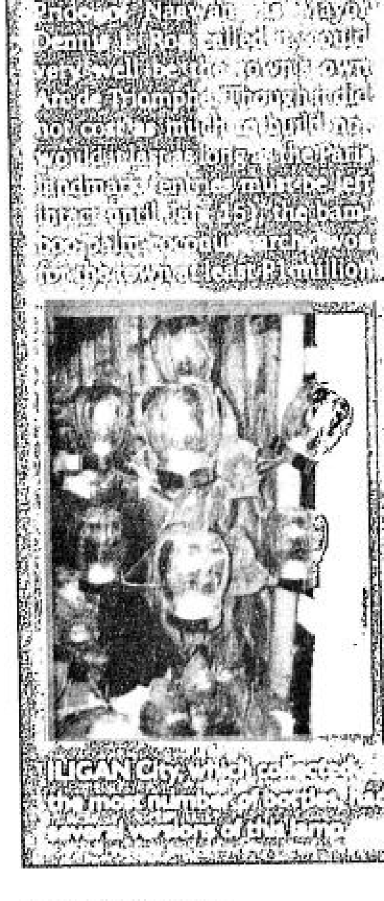
Naawan celebrated its victory in style, courtesy of Unilever. Despite the heavy rains on the evening of Dec. 17, people from the town and neighboring municipalities came in droves to watch, among others, Jolina Magdangal and Jimmy Bondoc perform.

Iligan, which had three entries, won a special citation [illegible] the Department of Education entry, which featured traditional symbols of the season [illegible] most number of [illegible] government [illegible] hall by [illegible] Mayor Lawrence Cruz [illegible] the people in the city were into the spirit of competition [illegible] brought [illegible] opened [illegible] mayo [illegible] sandwiches [illegible] volunteers.

Though only about [illegible] of Iligan's population [illegible] Muslims, [illegible] made a point to make them feel part of the whole project by having [illegible] of city hall.

In Tangub, with seven [illegible] filled with Lady's Choice [illegible] Mayor Jennifer [illegible] Vice Mayor [illegible]

[illegible]



ILIGAN City, which collected the most number of bottles [illegible]

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CHRISTMAS teammates Ricky Toledo, Chesca Carpo, Rajo Laurel, Claire Saw, Chito Vijandre, Rosan Cruz and Joey Carpo

Counting my blessings on monkey

TESSA!

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

NEWLYWEDS Paolo and Ria Prieto

ACE photographer Willy Saw and new wife Claire

CITRUS Bar owner Louie Ysmael with gorgeous wife Cecile

ART collector Patrick Reyno

OVER THE COURSE OF A year there have been many ups and downs, but 2005 is notable for my family because it has been a year of mountain-high peaks and subterranean-deep valleys. The year started out on a real nadir. In January, my hubby **Dennis** was on a business trip to India when the helicopter he was in crashed. He broke his back and had to stay in bed for six weeks. It didn't help that I was pregnant at the time of the accident.

From that ignominious start though, 2005 has steadily improved with countless blessings, and I am looking forward to an even better New Year, ideally with lots of fireworks. I am all too excited for the World Pyro Olympics this week. Ten countries are competing in an amazing 25-minute fireworks display. Enjoy the five-day competition at Esplanade behind SM Mall of Asia.

The highlight of the year was the arrival of **Athena Marean** at 10:05 p.m. on the auspicious date of 05-05-05. Athena was delivered in an "emergency" C-section, hours after obstetrician **Annebelle Aherrera** noted that I had a condition called placenta previa. Although this was my only nonnatural delivery, Athena has been healthy and a great charmer and, thus, a real joy and stress-reducer for all.

Now at seven months, Athena is still being nursed, a personal record and unchartered territory for us all! My little star was also recently featured on the cover of Mega magazine as one of Manila's future "10.5 women to watch." Athena was the .5!

JOJI Dingcong, Susan Joven, Girlie Rodis, Virgie Ramos and birthday boy Maurice Arcache

SPECIAL friends Sigalit Djemal, Rosan Cruz, Jeena Lopez and Eileen Grey

PRINT Town Rock n' Roll Christmas party with Dennis Valdes and Alex Reyes

My middle kids, **Tyrone** and **Annika**, have both had a fast-paced year. They're at that wonderful age range where they don't need *yayas* and can fly at half price so this has been a traveling year for them. As soon as Daddy could walk, he was with them for a week in the Gold Coast in Australia.

In August, the three joined wonderful aunt **Mary de Leon** for a week on Ocean Hunter II, her liveaboard in Palau. There, they both learned snorkeling, and Ty tried scuba diving, too. From the depths of Palau, next was the heights of Sagada when the adventuresome threesome accompanied the extended Reyes clan during the November long weekend.

Sagada was memorable because the last time Dennis was there was when my eldest son **Bryan** was around 10, exactly 10 years ago. The town is remarkably unchanged, except for another new hostel, the Rock Inn Garden, where they stayed. Tyrone and Annika both made the same treks that Bryan and Dennis did last time—a 2-km walk through the terraces to the Bomog-ok Big Waterfalls, then a three-hour spelunking adventure at Sumaging Cave.

Not satisfied with all their jaunts, Ty and Annika also accompanied Daddy, Mommy and Athena to the Shangri-La Mactan during the biennial Advertising Congress this year. There Tyrone got to try water skiing and he successfully stood up on his first try! After this, the totally jaded pair had one last vacation, this time to Apo Reef off southwest Mindoro, where we all joined **Joey** and **Marissa Concepcion** on their breathtaking yacht, M/Y Luisa, for some scuba diving and serious beach time.

This year, we missed Bryan so much. He's still away at Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, CA, and only got to come home in October for my brother **Paolo Prieto**'s wedding to **Ria Francisco**. My son is taller, leaner but not at all meaner. Instead, he is remarkably mature for his age. The best part is that he is getting along very nicely with his littlest sister, 20 years his junior! Athena is somehow accustomed to him without any fuss. Now a junior, he will be graduating in 2007.

Good year

In spite of the lingering excess fat, I have had a good year. Except for a small medical complication from the Caesarian section and the loss of my Canon digital camera, virtually all else has gone well.

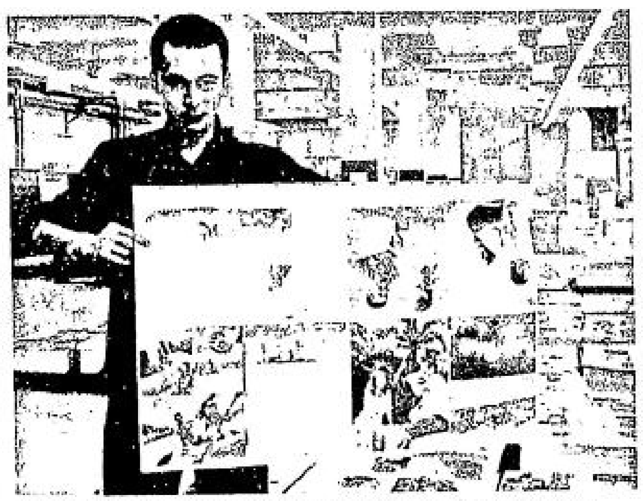
Thanks to my column, I am now a favorite on the media junket circuit. In August, Metro Society flew Dennis and I to Amanpulo for a weekend of photo shoots, snorkeling, and just some much-needed relaxing. Grab a copy of this month's issue of Metro Society and check out the wonders of digital enhancement.

Then in December, Volvo flew us to Bangkok to play in the Pro Am of the Volvo Masters of Asia. Of course, no visit to Bangkok would be complete without some serious shopping, spa-ing and eating.

HOT DJ Tirso "JNR" Garcia (in white) enjoying the party

I hope
I have
somehow
been
a blessing
to those
I know

SOUTH African friends Tertius and Zelda Vermeulen and cute boys



PRINT Town manager Jay Carrion with Metro Society proof

HAPPY family Mary de Leon and Kris Mijares with baby Chiara

VISITING son Bryan Prieto with his former Southridge teacher Tong Duran

The holiday season is not complete without our annual rockin' Christmas party here at my house with my dearest friends. Chronicler **Pepper Teehankee** even calls the affair the "highlight of his Christmas season!"

This year, aside from the hilarious exchange-gift game, I had my guests donate to the charity of the night, Pusong Assumptionista and Gawad Kalinga. We were able to raise enough to sponsor one house and we shall call it "Happy Queer House."

That evening, PR guru **Joji Dingcong** brought hot DJ **Tirso "JNR" Garcia**, who just flew in from Singapore. Toronto-born, JNR is now one of the hottest DJs in Singapore and has been the choice of top fashion house parties in Hong Kong and Shanghai. His credentials are so amazing and his unique style of house is chillingly cool!

Over the holidays, you'll find him exclusively in Manila's ultra chic lounge bar, Citrus (the old V Bar), newly opened by bar king **Louie Ysmael**. If you are clueless with the sounds of New York, Afro, Latin and French house, then I suggest you party at Citrus and get educated. JNR can really build up the vibe and is quite a stunner, too.

And with all that, we can see what a whirlwind year 2005 has been. Truly fitting for the Year of the Monkey, who has dizzied all of us with his tricks and turns. It's been an effort to keep ourselves grounded this year, focused on what is truly important: good health and the ability to spend some quality time with one another.

Msgr. **Manny Gabriel**, who celebrated our wedding 11 years ago and Print Town's recent Christmas Mass, said it best in his homily, advising all of us to "count our blessings, share our blessings and be a blessing to those we know." Nice words to ponder this Christmas! Happy holidays to all!

E-mail me at seaprincess@inquirer.com.ph

Christmastime in a bottle

TANGUB'S City Engineer's Office won the bronze for this display that included a rotating Lady's Choice "bottle."

From page E1

supervised the project, said they would probably lay off the mayonnaise and sandwich spread until February. That the city has this Christmas thing down pat was obvious from the complexity and diversity of its entries. The city engineer's office's bronze-winning project even had a revolving "bottle" of Lady's Choice made of rice straw looming over a large umbrella covering the nativity scene (the umbrella was supposed to be a metaphor for faith and the encompassing protection it offers).

Judges in this year's competition were National Artist Alejandro Roces, glass sculptor Ramon Orlina, architect Ma. Cristina Turalba, Tourism Assistant Secretary Eduardo Jarque and Unilever's Alex Tacderas.

A REPLICA of the Iligan City Hall is topped by a crescent and a cross, in recognition of Mindanao's two main religions.

ASSUMPTION HS Batch '81 Christmas photo session and planning for *velada* next year

year

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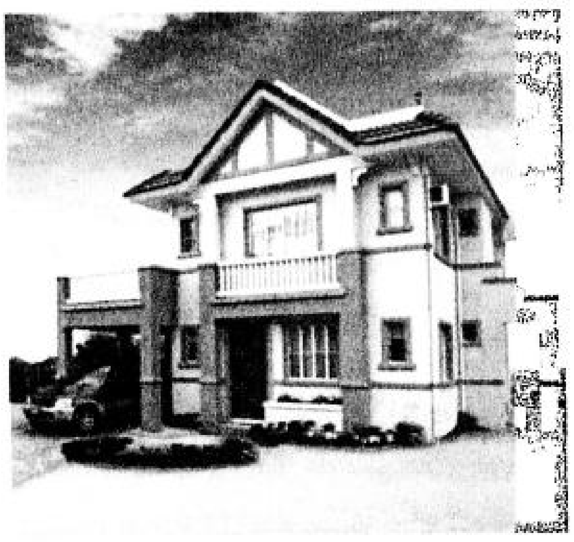

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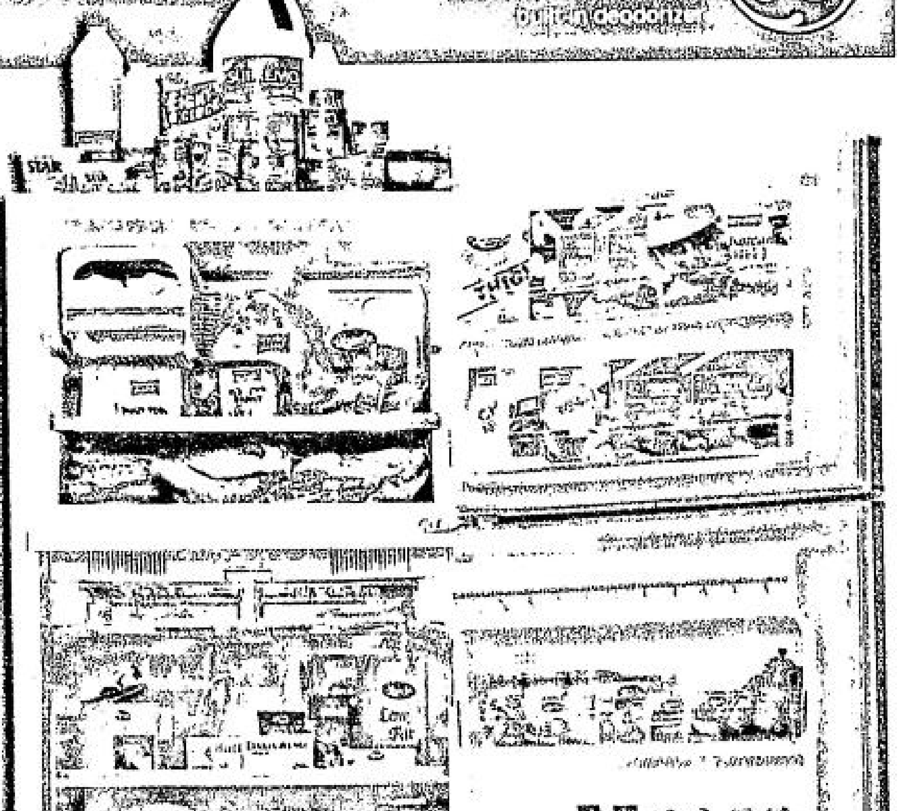

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KALINGA

Some residents prepared food for the GK Paskuhan

The colors of Christmas are evident in this man's stall

These children are current residents of the SMART Amazing Village

"We Need God's Power"

The SMART Amazing Village at the GK Paskuhan

The drive to the Baseco Compound somehow is not as bleak or dreary, shafts of sunshine pierce the gray clouds this morning of December 18, 2005. People coming to the Gawad Kalinga (GK) compound on this particular day, would find it hard not to think that special sunshine indeed has kissed this particular spot of once-charred earth.

Gawad Kalinga's Baseco story is a continuing one of the triumph of the human spirit. Where once a few company-sponsored shelters were just beginning to take shape and form, now the numbers are legion. Among them, the SMART Amazing Village stands as a proud testament to the partnership between business and the community, and the more responsive attack to the true roots of poverty.

Already of the 96 homes pledged for the SMART Amazing Village, 96 have been completed with two of these units being used as a SMART SIBOL School or Day Care facility. The SMART Amazing Village continues, as the entire Gawad Kalinga program does, to find new ways at true social progress.

On this particular day, an entire community gathered and celebrated with thanks. The GK Paskuhan united a people once beset by tragedy and circumstance but who were once more offered light at the end of the tunnel. It was also a day of remembrance to the Almighty especially with the approaching holidays. "No matter how many homes we build, we need God's power for true success," said Father Justin who offered the morning Mass. It made all in attendance aware of the fact that indeed He watches, and He listens.

It's not just about building homes...

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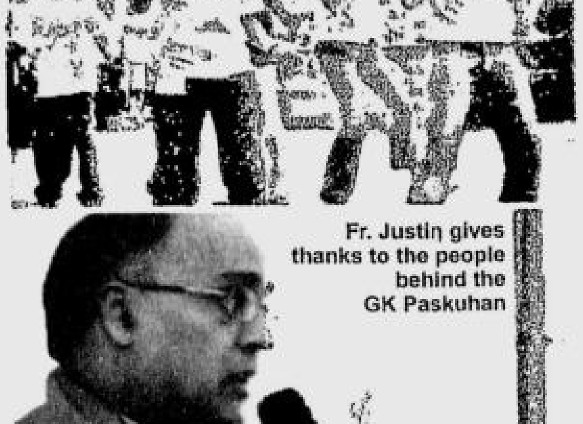
The GK Paskuhan allowed the residents to give thanks through song and dance numbers



Fr. Justin gives thanks to the people behind the GK Paskuhan

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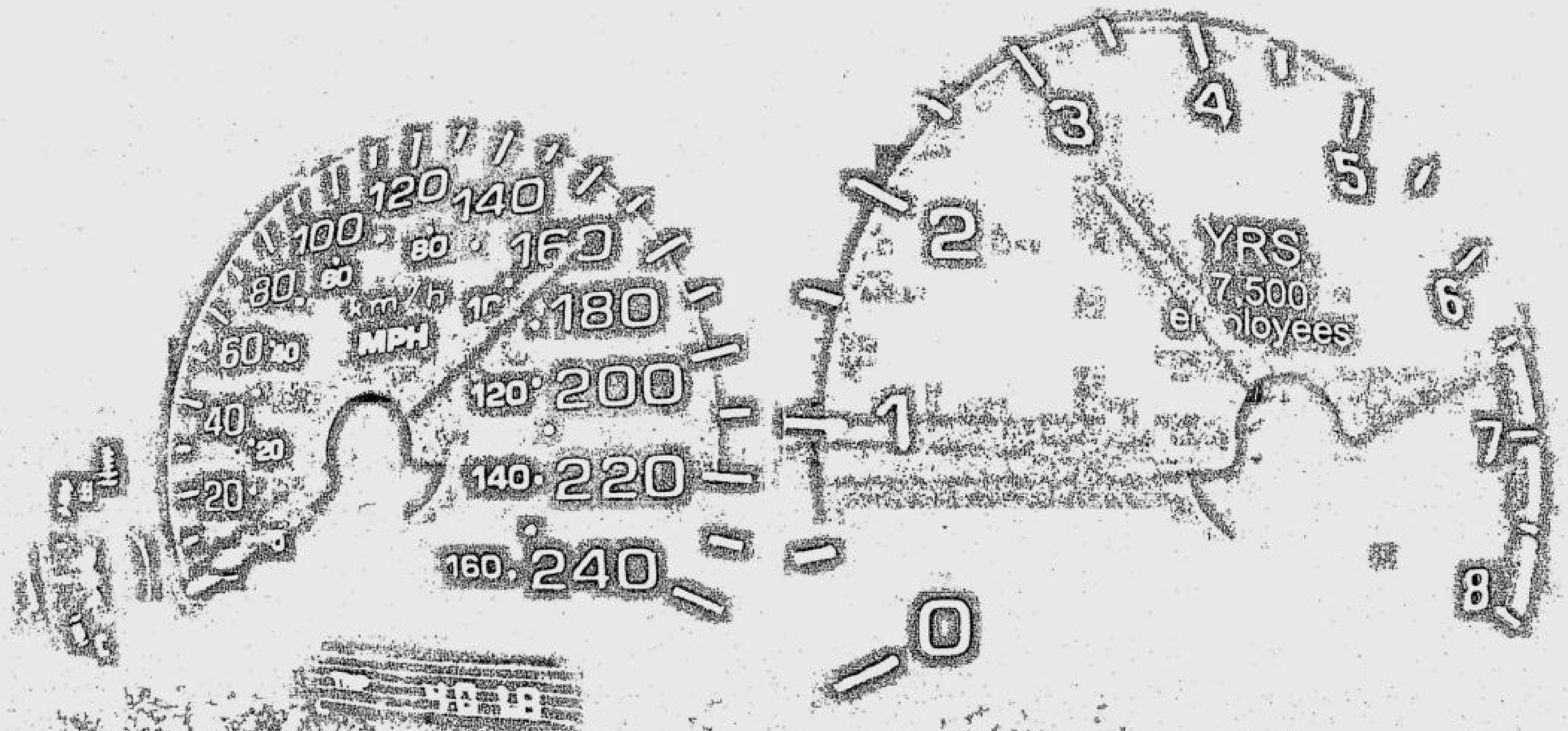

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- **January 14 - SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA @ 9AM** - Bahay Kamayan Restaurant Olongapo Gapan Rd., [Call Grace D. Antiojo (02) 879-8396 | Conrado Javier/Kristine (045) 961-2776 / 961-3782]
- **January 14 -TUGUEGARAO CITY @ 10AM** - Adrinel's Restaurant, #29 Rizal St., Tuguegarao City [Call Dr. Mary (078) 844-1305 | Ms. Gold (02) 879-0217 / 0916.749-6320]
- **January 15 - NUEVA VISCAYA @ 2PM** - Bread 'n' Bites - National Highway Solano Nueva Viscaya [Call Tina (078) 636-3397 | Gold Vinarao 879-0217 / 0916.749-6320]
- **January 21 - LIGTASAN, TARLAC CITY @ 9AM** - La Maja Rica Hotel Mc Arthur Hiway, Ligtasan, Tarlac [Call Angie Paminiuan (045) 611-2051 to 2053 | Grace Antiojo (02) 879.8396]
- **January 26 - ILAGAN, ISABELA @ 2pm** - Marjs Hotel, San Vicente, Ilagan Isabela [Call Mrs. Baby Neyra 0917.574-2587 | Ms. Gold 0916.7496320 / (02) 879-0217
- **January 29 - URDANETA, PANGASINAN @2PM** - Majoha Hotel & Rest. Mc. Arthur Highway, Nancayasan, Urdaneta City [Call Baby/Sidney Maglague (075) 568-2640 / 0919.748-4538 / (075) 568-6588 / (02) 879-0301]
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M/F, Not more than 40 years old

- Graduate of BSBA & Engineering
- At least 3 years minimum work experience; Thorough knowledge of BCP an advantage
- Conversationalist, hardworking, confident & assertive
- Must know how to drive

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M/F, Not more than 35 years old

- Graduate of BSBA & Engineering
- At least 3 years minimum work experience as supermarket salesman in FMCG
- With good communication skills, hardworking & assertive
- Must know how to drive

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- Graduate of BSBA & Engineering
- At least 5-8 years work experience in FMCG. Knowledge in BCP, Daily Routine, Territorial Management required
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PRISM
PRIVATE SECTOR MOBILIZATION FOR FAMILY PLANNING

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The Private Sector Mobilization in Family Planning (PRISM) Project

Scope of Work

Private Practice Specialist – Luzon

Background:

The PRISM Project supports USAID/Philippines' Strategic Objective 3, *Desired family size and improved health sustainably achieved*, focusing on three components: 1) increased workplace support for FP services and referrals, 2) establishment of viable, mass market brands of hormonal contraceptives, and 3) increased business value of FP among **private practice** providers.

The private practice component (component 3) of the project will be implemented nationally and the Luzon Private Practice Specialist will be responsible for supporting implementation of private practice component activities in Luzon.

General Tasks:

1. Review the project technical proposal and other relevant background documentation, including USAID/Philippines strategic plan, documents from other relevant projects in the Philippines (past and present) such as CMS and SOMARC, research results on private practice programs and initiatives, the project's 1st annual work plan (when completed), DHS reports, etc.
2. Participate in annual project work planning processes.
3. Collaborate with the M&E Specialist to monitor and evaluate private practice component activities in Luzon.
4. Coordinate with the Luzon Workplace and Market Development Specialists to identify and capitalize on synergies in project implementation across components.
5. Coordinate with the Luzon - based Regional Operations Manager for administrative and managerial matters.
6. Ensure that gender initiatives as defined by the Gender Specialist are properly implemented in all private practice component activities in Luzon.
7. Work with other technical and management staff to develop approaches and strategies to anticipate, prevent and counteract potential opposition to project activities from social forces such as faith-based groups.
8. Complete other tasks and assignments as deemed appropriate by the Private Practice Director.

Specific Tasks

Component 1: Workplace

1. Work with the Luzon Market Development Specialist to implement strategies to ensure that accurate, up-to-date lists of qualified private practitioners, including midwives, physicians, pharmacists, drug stores, and NGOs, and their location is provided to companies that provide family planning referral services to their employees.
2. Work with key collaborating institutions and the Associations Liaison Officer to assure active support and build capacity of professional associations in building support for provision of family planning services among their members. This will include providing assistance to prepare detailed work plans to accomplish this objective, develop and monitor Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to implement those work plans, and to provide technical assistance during implementation as needed.
3. Work with the Outreach and the BCC Specialists to disseminate outreach and education materials for professional associations to use in outreach campaigns that target their members.

Component 2: Market Development

1. Work with the Luzon Market Development Specialist to provide midwife entrepreneurs and other private practice providers with information on and access to reasonably priced contraceptive commodity supplies.
2. Work with the Luzon Market Development and the BCC Specialists to implement a plan to assist midwife entrepreneurs to advertise their services locally, including signage.

Component 3: Private Practice

1. Oversee identification and training of midwife entrepreneurs in Luzon.
2. Work with the Associations Liaison Officer to build relationships with midwife associations and to have contraceptive technology updates and FP topics included in seminars conducted by the associations.
3. Implement and manage activities targeted to other private practice providers in Luzon, such as single practice physicians and pharmacists.
4. Participate in national and Luzon regional meetings of provider and pharmacist associations to keep them abreast of project market development activities and to motivate interests in project participation by their members.
5. Work with the Pharmacy Specialist to implement strategies to improve FP counseling skills and practices at drug stores and to encourage drug stores to more actively stock and sell FP commodities.
6. Work with private practice physicians to improve inclusion of FP in their routine health care environment and encounters and provide FP commodities.
7. Contribute to overcoming providers' constraints to hormonal contraceptive prescription by addressing provider bias and deficits in their client counseling skills.
8. Establish working relationships with local LEAD project staff and their LGU counterparts to create opportunities and strategies for referral of clients from public clinics to private practice providers.
9. Work with the Senior Grants Manager to oversee implementation of grants and subcontracts let in support of private practice activities. In consultation with the Private Practice Director, determine technical assistance needs of grantees and subcontractors, define and implement a plan to provide for these needs.

Reporting:

The Luzon Private Practice Specialist will report directly to the PRISM's Regional Operations Director or his designee, who will be responsible for monitoring the specialist's overall performance.

Qualifications:

- Networking experience with business organizations, health provider associations, pharmaceutical industry associations, is an advantage
- Thorough knowledge, including practical experience, of private sector health services particularly FP and RH.
- Minimum of 2 years experience working with private practitioners and their associations in implementing FP or health programs.
- With expertise to coordinate and collaborate with a diverse range of practitioners in the implementation of strategies to increase FP use in the private sector.
- Demonstrated leadership working with other technical advisors, local counterparts in the public and private sectors, policy makers, and project staff,
- Exceptional interpersonal, teamwork, written and verbal communication, and supervisory skills
- With strong business/corporate background
- Proficient in Word, Excel, Powerpoint

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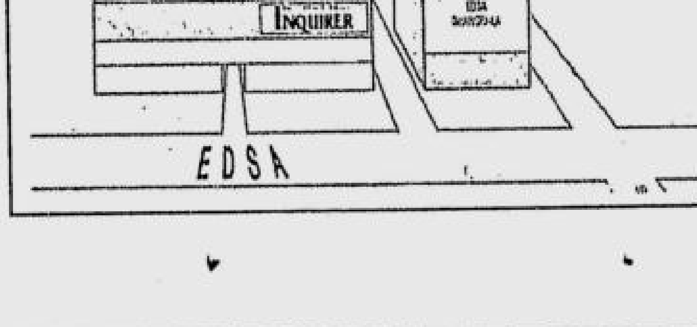

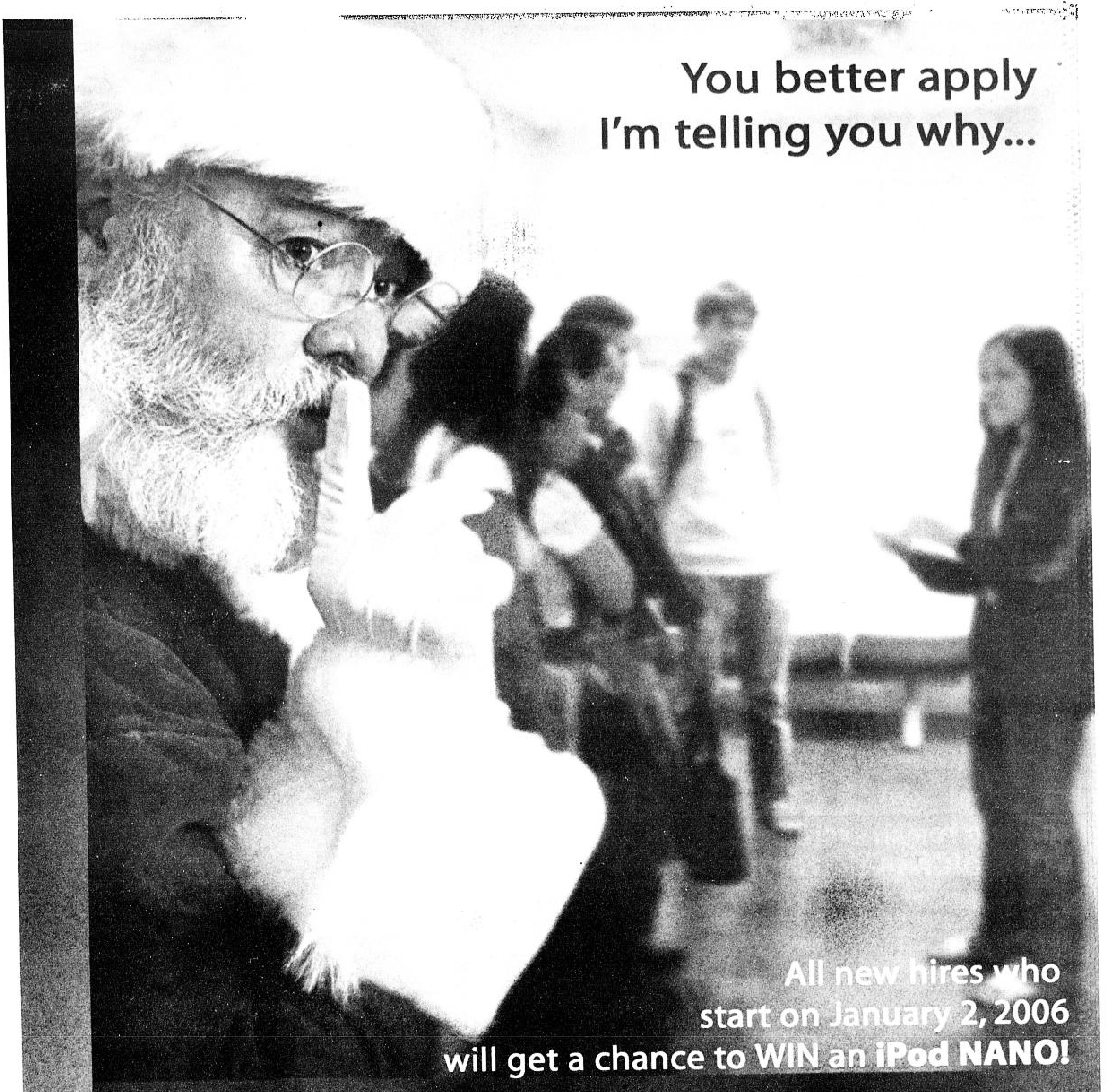

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Purchasing Director

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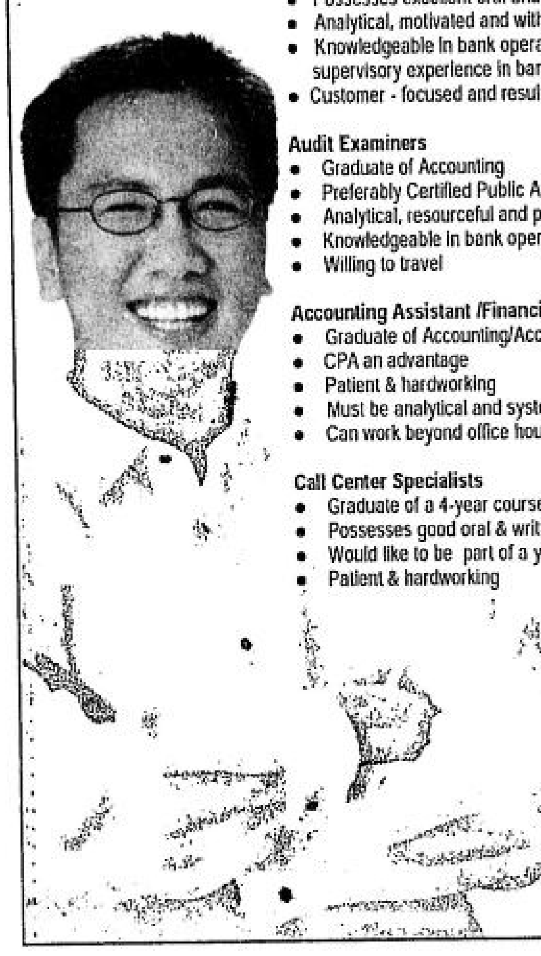

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- Possesses good oral and written communication skills; preferably Chinese speaking
- Experience in marketing and account management an advantage
- Highly motivated, aggressive and flexible
- Able to work under pressure with minimal supervision

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- A graduate of any business related course
- Possesses good oral and written communication skills; preferably Chinese speaking
- Experience in marketing and account management
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- Must have good presentation and negotiation skills

Account Officers for Corporate Banking (Metro Manila)
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- Highly motivated, aggressive and possesses good communication skills
- Team player
- Able to work under pressure with minimal supervision

Account Officer for Small Business Division
- Preferably not more than 35 years old
- Must have at least 2 years experience in credit/loans management (preferably with appraisal, documentation & loan collection background)
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- Must be honest and hardworking

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- Appreciation of family planning program success factors
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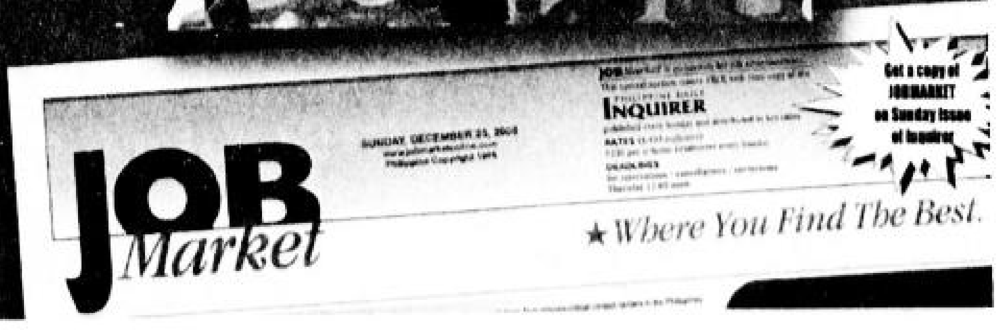

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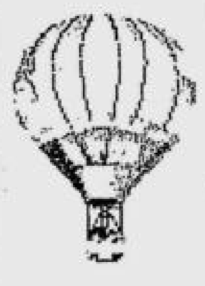

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2. Follows-up the timely submission of quarterly COE of projects;
3. Serves as Focal Point for communications among the Provincial Administrative-Finance Clerks and Provincial Project Coordinators and the Country Office Finance Unit;
4. Performs other duties that may be assigned by the Admin-Finance Associate and Finance Assistants and as may be requested by the Programme Officers from time to time;
5. Processes payment of office-related expenditures such as supplies, travel, gasoline, mobile phones, etc.;
6. Take charge of the safekeeping and releasing of cheques;
7. Follow-up with concerned projects the audit findings and recommendations and ensures that these are taken up properly;

Job Requirements:

The candidate must have a college degree in business administration or office management with 1 to 3 years of experience in the relevant field. She/He must be highly proficient in Wordprocessing, spreadsheets, Powerpoint and other current office software and fluent in English.

Functional competencies required are integrity, cultural sensitivity, commitment to the UN mandate, ability to work with teams and to communicate clearly and effectively, analytical and strategic thinking, results orientation and responsibility for own learning and development.

Qualifications:

Must be a graduate of business administration or accounting.
Must have at least 1 to 3 years of experience in accounting and finance.
Familiarity with UNFPA rules and procedures is an asset
Must be proficient in MS Word, MS Excel, PowerPoint and internet applications.
Must have good interpersonal and communications skills.
Demonstrate and promote teamwork, integrity and impartiality in all matters affecting his/her work.
Applicants are requested to send their application letters indicating post title together with completed UN
Personal History Forms (P.11), available at www.unfpa.org.ph/jobs to:

The Country Representative
United Nations Population Fund
30/F, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza
6819 Ayala Avenue corner Buendia, Makati

Or through email at officemail@unfpa.org.ph

Salary: Negotiable based on experience and qualifications
Deadline for submission of applications: 6 January 2006 (Only short-listed applicants will be notified).

UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND

The Office of the Representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Manila is seeking applications from competent candidates to fill the post of

Provincial Administrative-cum-Finance Assistant (AFA) for Eastern Samar

Under the overall guidance of the UNFPA Area Officer, the technical guidance of the UNFPA Administrative and Finance Assistants and the immediate supervision of the UNFPA Provincial Project Coordinator (PPC) for Eastern Samar, the AFA will perform the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Assist the PPC and the designated Provincial and Municipal Focal Persons in the establishment of the Provincial and Municipal Project Management Unit (PMU) and in the installation of the administrative and financial systems and procedures in this project unit;
2. Handle all correspondence and communications pertaining to the provincial and municipal UNFPA projects, take charge of records management and provide secretarial services such as preparation of minutes, place and receive telephone calls, etc;
3. Attend to the administrative needs of the projects including procurement and distribution of office supplies and equipment and their maintenance;
4. Handle all financial transactions of the provincial and municipal projects and closely monitor the status of funds utilization in the province and municipalities;
5. Assist the province and municipalities in the accomplishment of financial forms and preparation of reports on a quarterly basis and consolidate reports for submission to UNFPA Finance in Manila;
6. Coordinate the conduct of the provincial and municipal audits;
7. Perform other tasks that may be assigned by the UNFPA Area Officer, UNFPA AFA, or the PPC.

Qualifications:

Must be a graduate of business administration, accounting or HR-related courses, preferably a CPA.
Must have at least 5 years of experience in accounting and finance, administration and human resource management, working with foreign-assisted projects.
Familiarity with UNFPA rules and procedures is an asset
Must be proficient in MS Word, MS Excel, PowerPoint and internet applications.
Must have good interpersonal and communications skills.
Demonstrate and promote teamwork, integrity and impartiality in all matters affecting his/her work.
Willing to travel to depressed and disadvantaged areas and be based Eastern Samar.
Applicants are requested to send their application letters indicating post title together with completed UN
Personal History Forms (P.11), available at www.unfpa.org.ph/jobs to:

The Country Representative
United Nations Population Fund
30/F, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza
6819 Ayala Avenue corner Buendia, Makati

Or through email at officemail@unfpa.org.ph
Salary: Negotiable based on experience and qualifications
Deadline for submission of applications: 6 January 2006 (Only short-listed applicants will be notified).

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- Bring resumé w/ picture on the following dates:
  Dec. 27 - 29, 2005 (10AM - 12PM)
  Jan. 2 - 5, 2005 (10AM - 12PM)

SECRETARY Female graduate of any 4-yrs Business course. Computer literate in all MS applications. Must know how to prepare correspondence (letter, fax, or e-mail) & writing minutes of meeting. Have worked in similar position for at least 2 yrs. Must know how to speak Chinese Languages

IMPORT ASSISTANTS Female single graduate of any college course. Computer Literate. Coordinates with shipping line, forwarders, banks & brokers. Capable of import-export documentation & bank negotiation. Can classified proper tariff heading & computation on duties & taxes. Preferably with working experience in importer or broker company

ACCOUNTING STAFFS Female graduate of commerce course w/ Accounting courses. Knowledge in General Accounting Functions such as Payable, Receivables, Payrolls, Inventory & others

Applicants who know how to speak Chinese Languages is a premium.

Pls. tel for interview schedule the following data
Name Age Status (Single Married or Single Parent) Address (Staying w/ whom) Course graduate Previous [illegible]

CP # 0917-7165568
Or e-mail your resume or bio-data with recent photo to e-mail: [illegible]@yahoo.com.ph

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) is in need of the following personnel:

A. Contractual Staff for Foreign-funded project:

I. One (1) PROJECT OFFICER, SG 22

Salary/Benefits:

Php 20, 251 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift,.productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications:

Bachelor's degree, preferably with MA units in Management, or in related fields such as public administration, sociology, political science, demography and/or women's studies; 4 years experience in development work, preferably in GAD related fields, with broad knowledge in gender and development, population and reproductive health issues; with excellent communication (oral and written) skills, as well as analytical skills.

2. One (1) FINANCE/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, SG 14

Salary/Benefits:

Php 13, 546 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications:

Bachelor's degree, preferably in business management, accounting and commerce; knowledgeable in government accounting and auditing rules and regulations; 3-4 years of experience in administrative/accounting-related work; proficient in computer operations and must have good oral and written communications skills.

3. One (1) ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT II

Salary/Benefits:

Php 9,709 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications:

At least two years of college studies; with one year experience in administrative/secretarial related work; knowledgeable in government accounting and auditing rules and regulations; and proficient in computer operations.

4. One (1) Administrative Aide IV, SG 4

Salary/Benefits

Php7,522 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash, gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications:

At least two years of college studies with valid professional driver's license; two years experience in driving; skilled in auto-mechanics; familiar with traffic rules and regulations and streets in Metro Manila, including nearby cities and provinces; physically, mentally and medically fit (e.g. good hearing and 20-20 vision); and has the ability to follow simple oral and written instructions.

B. Permanent staff to fill vacancies

1. Two (2) Planning Officer IV, SG 22

Salary/Benefits:

Php 20,251 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications Requirements for Item No. NCRFWB-PLO4-2-1998 (IRD)

Bachelor's degree in Communications, Journalism, Public Relations, or other related fields preferably with Master's Degree/units; at least five (5) years of experience in communications, public information and media relations, editorial services, planning and management of public information program and advocacy campaigns, development of multimedia materials/packages, media research and monitoring, event management and social marketing; 24 hours relevant training on communication, journalism, public relations, events management and social marketing; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and processes; familiarity with gender and other development issues; excellent writing and oral communication skills; Career Service Professional/relevant eligibility for second level position.

Qualifications Requirement for Item No. NCRFWB-PLO4-1-1998 (MED)

Bachelor's degree in any social or behavioral science courses, preferably with MA units; 3-4 years of experience in program/project development, implementation,monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy work; 24 hours relevant training on advocacy and program implementation, monitoring and evaluation; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and processes; familiarity with gender and other development issues, excellent writing and oral communication skills; Career Service Professional/relevant eligibility for second level position.

2. Two (2) ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT III, SG 09

Salary/Benefits:

Php 10,318 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualification Requirements for Item No. NCRFWB-ADAS3-6-2004

Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Computer Management, Information Technology or other related fields; at least two (2) years experience in data encoding and records management, basic PC troubleshooting, desktop publishing; 4 hours relevant training on records management, PC troubleshooting, desktop publishing; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and process; familiarity with gender and other development issues; career Service Sub-professional/relevant eligibility for first level position.

Qualification Requirement for Item No. NCRFWB-ADAS3-4-2004

Bachelor's degree in any behavioral or secretarial or office management courses; at least two (2) years experience in secretarial/administrative work; 4 hours relevant training; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and process; familiarity with gender and other development issues; career Service Sub-professional/relevant eligibility for first level position.

3. Two (2) Planning Officer II – SG 15

Salary/Benefits:

Php 14,300 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualification Requirement for Item No. NCRFWB-PLO2-1-1998 (MED)

Bachelor's Degree in any social or behavioral science courses; 2-3 years of experience in program/project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and advocacy work; 24 hours relevant training on advocacy and program implementation, monitoring and evaluation; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and processes; familiarity with gender and other development issues. excellent writing and oral communication skills: Career Service Professional/relevant eligibility for second level position.

Qualification Requirement for NCRFWB-PLO2-1-1998 (PAD-Reliever only)

Bachelor's degree, preferably in Political Science, Community Development, Women in Development, Sociology, Development Studies, Demography, Economics and Public Administration; at least two (2) years experience in any of the following development work; advocacy, policy analysis and organizing and coordinating functions; 24 hours training in research and development and policy analysis; knowledge of and/or experience in the business of government including its structures and processes; familiarity with gender and other development issues; very good writing and oral communication skills; career Service Professional/relevant eligibility for second level position.

4. One (1) Executive Assistant III – SG (20) NCRFWB-EXA3-1-1998

Salary Benefits:

Php 18,799 salary/allowance per month; + annual bonus, cash gift, productivity incentive bonus, clothing allowance, etc.

Qualifications:

Bachelor's degree in any social or behavioral science and management courses; 3-4 years of experience in office management and administration; 24 hours relevant training; knowledge of and experience in the business of government including its structures and processes; familiarity with gender and other development issues; excellent writing and oral communication skills; and has the ability to deal with all kind of people and different level; Career Service Professional/relevant eligibility for second level position.

Please bring your application and curriculum vitae not later than January 15, 2006 at:

Personnel Office
National Commission
on the Role of Filipino Women
1145 J.P. Laurel Street
San Miguel, Manila

Or you may send it to:
ncrfw_personnel@yahoo.com

Please visit our website www.ncrfw.gov.ph for details of above vacancies

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Quezon City, 1128 Philippines

Tel: +63 2 920 7923/26
Fax: +63 2 426 3927
kkp@wwf.org.ph
www.wwf.org.ph

WWF, one of the world's leading independent conservation organisations, with a global network active in 100 countries is seeking to recruit a:

Climate Change and Energy Campaign Officer

The Climate Change and Energy Campaign Officer will work for WWF Philippines based in Quezon City. The position will be primarily responsible for developing strategy and managing the campaign for the Climate and Energy Programme, which includes building constituency, networking, lobbying, organizing public action and events, and preparing campaign materials. The position will be required to work closely with other members of the WWF Philippines conservation divisions/units and WWF's International Climate Change Team.

The main responsibilities will include:

- Plan and implement the campaign of the Climate and Energy Policy Programme
- Implement the awareness-raising component of the Climate and Energy programme
- Assist in building constituency to support climate and energy work
- Create and maintain network in media
- Work on international projects with other WWF offices in the region
- Serve as resource person for project and education activities
- Develop communication tools, materials and messages
- Develop campaign materials
- Attend and Participate in WWF Climate and Energy Policy regional and international meetings, and conferences

The requirements are:

- Filipino nationality with excellent written and spoken English
- Undergraduate degree in either communications, natural sciences, economics or political science
- At least 3 years campaign experience
- Proven ability to work under own initiative, be resourceful and work as a team
- Good understanding of how climate and energy policy links with campaign and communications work
- Excellent interpersonal, networking and presentational skills
- Enthusiasm for the subject and conservation as a whole
- Demonstrated commitment to environmental protection and a clear view on the role of environmental groups in society

Interested candidates may apply with three references and salary expected within fifteen days. Please email Ina Pozon at ipozon@wwf.org.ph and Raf Senga at rsenga@wwf.org.ph.

WWF– World Wide Fund For Nature (also known as World Wildlife Fund)

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- **Assess potential to expand market visibility in the Visayas and Mindanao areas and make critical recommendations in relation to expansion**
- **Implement marketing programs and campaigns if need arises**

Please send us your resume if you have the following qualifications:

- Female, 23 to 30 years old, residing within the Metro Cebu area
- Must have work experience in the air transport industry, preferably in the travel agency and airline sectors. Experience in the freight forwarding industry will also be an advantage
- As the job involves minimum supervision from the Manila office, she must be able to work independently and within her own pace
- Must be result-oriented and should be able to meet goals and targets in the most efficient ways
- Good command of verbal and written English as well as several Visayan dialects, most importantly Cebuano
- Strong "people-orientation" and with strong analytical skills
- Must have mastery in the use of the Internet and MS Office as contact with the Manila office will almost be entirely thru available telecommunications channels

As the need for the position is urgent, please send your comprehensive resume with digitized picture and contact number preferably through email to this address:
virgilio.maguigad@dlh.de

CEBU PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SERVICES (CPILS INC.)

Cebu Pacific International Language Services, Inc. (CPILS, INC.) is a pioneering and fast-growing ESL/EFL Center in Cebu, specializing in teaching short-term, non-credit and intensive English courses to international students who are non-native speakers.

We are looking for competent individuals to fill the following positions:

KOREAN COOK

- Preferably Male
- Between 25 and 35 years old
- Preferably college level
- With at least one year experience in a hotel / restaurant
- Knowledgeable in Korean dishes and styles of cooking
- Can speak English well
- Must have good supervisory and organizational skills
- Can handle pressure

HOUSEKEEPING SUPERVISOR

- Preferably Male
- Between 25 and 35 years old
- With experience
- Preferably college level
- With good English communication skills is an advantage
- Must be responsible and discreet
- With good supervisory and organizational skills
- Can handle pressure

Applicants must submit their application letter with recent 2X2 picture, resume, TOR, certificate of employment/recommendation letter to:

HRD
Cebu Pacific International Language Services
Benedicto Building (formerly Harbor View Hotel)
M.J. Cuenco Avenue Cebu, City

Or you can send your applications through our e-mail address
eliza_cpils@yahoo.com

The British Council's purpose is to enhance the reputation of the UK in the world as a valued partner.

We are interested in filling the post of:

Examinations Services Assistant
(Ref: ESA-05-01)

This post will provide effective service support to the Examination Services Department.

The successful applicant must be a college graduate and should be able to demonstrate:

- achievement (ability to get things done)
- team working
- flexibility
- intermediate level IT literacy
- administrative skills

It is essential that an applicant has strong customer service orientation, excellent oral and written communication skills in English, and the ability to work in a team is required. All applicants should have at least two (2) years relevant work experience. Previous employment by an international organisation is desirable.

For full information and to download an application form, please visit our website:

www.britishcouncil.org.ph

Completed application forms should be sent to **HR@britishcouncil.org.ph indicating subject reference number.** For applicants without access to the Internet, application forms will be available at British Council Knowledge & Learning Centre, 10th Floor, Taipan Place, Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Centre, Pasig City. **No further documentation need be attached.** The office will be closed from 24 December 2005 and resume on 4 January 2006 but applicants may submit their applications to the guard.

Closing date: 3 January 2006

BRITISH COUNCIL

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER
East Avenue, Quezon City

Is now accepting applications for
Academic Year 2006

FELLOWSHIPS:

I. **3-Year Fellowship Training Program in Adult Cardiology**
  ◆ Certificate of Residency Training in Internal Medicine accredited by PCP
  ◆ PCP Diplomate

II. **1-Year Subspecialty Fellowship Training Program in Electrophysiology, Cardiac Rehabilitation, Non-Invasive Cardiology, Invasive Cardiology, Peripheral Vascular and Critical Care Cardiology.**
  ◆ Have completed Residency Training in Internal Medicine and Fellowship in Cardiology in PCP and PCC accredited institutions
  ◆ PCP Diplomate
  ◆ Submit a research proposal
  ◆ Certificate of Fellowship

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2006**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on April 1, 2006**

III. **CV Anesthesiology Division**
  ◆ 3 years Residency in General Anesthesia accredited by PBA (Board eligible)

IV. **Pediatric Cardiovascular Medicine Department**
  ◆ 3 years Residency in General Pediatric accredited by PPS
  ◆ at least passed written examination for Diplomate in Pediatrics

V. **Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Division**
  ◆ 4 years Residency in General Surgery accredited by PCS (Board eligible)

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

RESIDENCIES : (For Medical Board Passers)

I. **Nuclear Medicine Section**
  ◆ **Academic Graduates** – Medical School
  ◆ **Medical Board Passer**

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

General Requirements:

1. Medical Diploma
2. Transcript of Records with the General Weighted Average
3. Itemized Board Rating
4. Three (3) Letters of Recommendation with at least one letter written by the Training Officer &/or Director of the previous Training Programs / duplicate letters or photocopies signed by different Doctors will not be accepted)
5. Four (4) pcs. 2"x2" colored picture

Please address your communications to:
ARISTIDES G. PANLILIO, M.D.
Department Manager II
Office of Education and Research
Philippine Heart Center
East Avenue, Quezon City

For further inquiries, please contact Ms. Carmela M. Ocasion or Ms. Cleopatra Q. Palencia with Tel. Nos. 925-2401 locals 3234, 3235, 3236 & 3237 and Telefax 926-9622 or you can email to oer@phc.gov.ph

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CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES

PROTECTED AREAS SPECIALIST

The Challenge:

This position will oversee CI Philippines' protected areas initiatives by supporting and articulating coherent proposals and strategies for protected areas in the Philippine hotspot, facilitating partnerships with local, government and public organizations, assessment and application of application legislations on protected areas, and facilitating the generation and dissemination of relevant information to promote conservation outcomes as mechanisms and processes for pursuing biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

The Person:

- Advanced degree in Natural Resources Management, Development Management, or related field
- At least 5 years experience in PA design and Management, Natural Resource Management, and program management in a supervisory or managerial capacity
- Capacity to represent CI and lead relations with local and national NGOs, governmental agencies and decision-makers.
- Experience with protected area policies, institutions, and financial mechanisms; preferably with working experience on NIPAS process, IPRA Law and Fisheries Code
- Thorough understanding of the conservation and socio-economic context of conservation action sites
- Demonstrated ability to lead, direct, and manage teams and programs.
- Demonstrated ability in building strategic alliances and consensus among diverse stakeholder groups
- Experience in fundraising, including grant writing and grant management.
- Ability to perform well under pressure
- Healthy sense of humor

Interested applicants may submit their application with comprehensive resume to:

The Human Resources Manager
Conservation International-Philippines
6 Maalalahanin St., Teachers Village
Diliman, Quezon City, 1101
or email: hcardenas@conservation.org

(Only short listed candidates will be notified)

Teleperformance
GLOBAL CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

TECHNICAL SUPPORT REPRESENTATIVES

Must possess at least a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Information Technology or its equivalent; technical background is a plus

BI-LINGUAL CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

Fluent in Spanish and English verbal and written communication skills; prior call center experience is an advantage

CALL CENTER AGENTS

At least second year college / graduate of any course; eighteen (18) years old and above; ability to effectively communicate in English; willing to work in various shifts including graveyard; typing speed (minimum of 25wpm)

TRAINERS

Excellent presentation skills; strong technical background is a must; call center experience is a plus; team-oriented and able to work in a fast-paced environment

SUPERVISORS / TEAM LEADERS
(Technical and Customer Service account)

Must have at least six (6) months - one (1) year supervisory experience in a call center; must be an extrovert and must have an energetic personality; ability to multi-task; good time management skill

QUALITY ASSURANCE SUPERVISOR

College graduate; must have two (2) years supervisory experience, at least one of which should be in Operations

MISSION CONTROL ANALYSTS

Six (6) months customer service experience; one (1) year call center experience; ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines; demonstrate leadership skills, dependability and initiative; flexible schedule

DATABASE PROGRAMMER

Very knowledgeable in Microsoft SQL Server, Crystal reports, MySQL, Visual Basic, Linux, Apache and Scripting languages; experienced in programming user interfaces and database processing under Web and Client Server environment

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PRISM
PRIVATE SECTOR MOBILIZATION FOR FAMILY PLANNING

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The Private Sector Mobilization for Family Planning (PRISM) Project
Scope of Work
Workplace Specialist – Luzon

Background:

The PRISM Project supports USAID/Philippines' Strategic Objective 3, *Desired family size and improved health sustainably achieved*, focusing on three components: 1) increased **workplace** support for FP services and referrals, 2) establishment of viable, **mass market** brands of hormonal contraceptives, and 3) increased business value of FP among **private practice** providers.

The workplace component (component 1) of the project will be implemented nationally and the Luzon Workplace Specialist will be responsible for supporting implementation of workplace component activities in the Luzon.

General Tasks:

1. Review the project technical proposal and other relevant background documentation, including USAID/ Philippines strategic plan, documents from other relevant projects in the Philippines (past and present) such as CMS, research results on workplace health programs and initiatives, the project's 2nd annual work plan (when completed), DHS reports, etc.
2. Participate in annual project work planning processes.
3. Collaborate with the M&E Specialist to monitor and evaluate workplace component activities in Luzon.
4. Coordinate with the Luzon Market Development and Private Practice Specialists to identify and capitalize on potential synergies in project implementation across components.
5. Coordinate with the Luzon Regional Operations Director for administrative and managerial matters.
6. Ensure that gender initiatives as defined by the Gender Specialist are properly implemented in all workplace component activities in Luzon.
7. Work with other technical and management staff to develop approaches and strategies to anticipate, prevent and counteract potential opposition to project activities from social forces such as faith-based groups.
8. Complete other tasks and assignments as deemed appropriate by the Workplace Director.

Specific Tasks

Component 1: Workplace

1. Work with the Associations Liaison Officer to liaise with affiliates of national business associations and industry and trade associations in Luzon to identify companies that fit the project participation requirements for the workplace component.
2. Assist business associations to promote and implement workplace activities in their members companies in Luzon.
3. Work with business associations to contact the companies identified as eligible for project participation and assess their interest in participating.
4. Work with the Training Specialist to assess the training needs of companies interested in participating in the project.
5. Make recommendations for participation and training needs of companies in Luzon.
6. Liaise with project professional staff, especially the Training Specialist, and the Quality Improvement and Assurance Specialist, to facilitate implementation of training, oversee quality and completeness of training activities, and monitor and evaluate workplace results in Luzon.
   Work with the BCC and Policy/Outreach Specialists to implement public relations, outreach and mass media activities in Luzon.
8. Support the BCC Specialist to implement an assessment of employers, employees, and labor unions with respect to awareness of workplace laws and regulations regarding health and family planning services, and practices with respect to service delivery and demand, and how best to improve practices.
9. Work with labor unions to define strategies by which they can support workplace component activities among participating companies in Luzon or to enlist their support to encourage reluctant companies to participate.
10. Coordinate with the Luzon Market Development and Private Practice Specialists to identify and capitalize on potential synergies in project implementation across components, for example to link workplaces with FP commodity supplies or to refer workers to midwife entrepreneurs for services.
11. Work with the Senior Grants Manager to oversee implementation of grants and subcontracts let in support of workplace activities. In consultation with the Workplace Director, determine technical assistance needs of grantees and subcontractors, define and implement a plan to provide for these needs.

Reporting:

The Luzon Workplace Specialist will report directly to PRISM's Luzon Regional Operations Director or his designee, who will be responsible for monitoring the specialist's overall performance.

Qualifications:

- With at least 2 years of meaningful experience in the installation of FP program in the workplace
- Networking experience with business organizations, health provider associations, pharmaceutical industry associations, is an advantage
- With at least 10 years managerial experience
- Excellent in written and oral communications
- With strong business/corporate background
- Proficient in Word, Excel, Powerpoint

Interested applicants should e-mail their application letter and CV at jobs@prism.org.ph on or before 31st of December 2005. Please indicate the subject of your email as "**Position Code: WS-L**".

PRISM
PRIVATE SECTOR MOBILIZATION FOR FAMILY PLANNING

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

The Private Sector Mobilization in Family Planning (PRISM) Project
Scope of Work
Private Practice Specialist – Visayas

Background:

The PRISM Project supports USAID/Philippines' Strategic Objective 3, *Desired family size and improved health sustainably achieved*, focusing on three components: 1) increased **workplace** support for FP services and referrals, 2) establishment of viable, **mass market** brands of hormonal contraceptives, and 3) increased business value of FP among **private practice** providers.

The private practice component (component 3) of the project will be implemented nationally and the Visayas Private Practice Specialist will be responsible for supporting implementation of private practice component activities in the Visayas.

General Tasks:

1. Review the project technical proposal and other relevant background documentation, including USAID/Philippines strategic plan, documents from other relevant projects in the Philippines (past and present) such as CMS and SOMARC, research results on private practice programs and initiatives, the project's 1st annual work plan (when completed), DHS reports, etc.
2. Participate in annual project work planning processes.
3. Collaborate with the M&E Specialist to monitor and evaluate private practice component activities in the Visayas.
4. Coordinate with the Visayas Workplace and Market Development Specialists to identify and capitalize on synergies in project implementation across components.
5. Coordinate with the Visayas - based Regional Operations Manager for administrative and managerial matters.
6. Ensure that gender initiatives as defined by the Gender Specialist are properly implemented in all private practice component activities in the Visayas.
7. Work with other technical and management staff to develop approaches and strategies to anticipate, prevent and counteract potential opposition to project activities from social forces such as faith-based groups.
8. Complete other tasks and assignments as deemed appropriate by the Private Practice Director.

Specific Tasks

Component 1: Workplace

1. Work with the Visayas Market Development Specialist to implement strategies to ensure that accurate, up-to-date lists of qualified private practitioners, including midwives, physicians, pharmacists, drug stores, and NGOs, and their location is provided to companies that provide family planning referral services to their employees.
2. Work with key collaborating institutions and the Associations Liaison Officer to assure active support and build capacity of professional associations in building support for provision of family planning services among their members. This will include providing assistance to prepare detailed work plans to accomplish this objective, develop and monitor Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to implement those work plans, and to provide technical assistance during implementation as needed.
3. Work with the Outreach and the BCC Specialists to disseminate outreach and education materials for professional associations to use in outreach campaigns that target their members.

Component 2: Market Development

1. Work with the Visayas Market Development Specialist to provide midwife entrepreneurs and other private practice providers with information on and access to reasonably priced contraceptive commodity supplies.
2. Work with the Visayas Market Development and the BCC Specialists to implement a plan to assist midwife entrepreneurs to advertise their services locally, including signage.

Component 3: Private Practice

1. Oversee identification and training of midwife entrepreneurs in the Visayas.
2. Work with the Associations Liaison Officer to build relationships with midwife associations and to have contraceptive technology updates and FP topics included in seminars conducted by the associations.
3. Implement and manage activities targeted to other private practice providers in the Visayas, such as single practice physicians and pharmacists.
4. Participate in national and Visayas regional meetings of provider and pharmacist associations to keep them abreast of project market development activities and to motivate interests in project participation by their members.
5. Work with the Pharmacy Specialist to implement strategies to improve FP counseling skills and practices at drug stores and to encourage drug stores to more actively stock and sell FP commodities.
6. Work with private practice physicians to improve inclusion of FP in their routine health care environment and encounters and provide FP commodities
7. Contribute to overcoming providers' constraints to hormonal contraceptive prescription by addressing provider bias and deficits in their client counseling skills
8. Establish working relationships with local LEAD project staff and their LGU counterparts to create opportunities and strategies for referral of clients from public clinics to private practice providers.
9. Work with the Senior Grants Manager to oversee implementation of grants and subcontracts let in support of private practice activities. In consultation with the Private Practice Director, determine technical assistance needs of grantees and subcontractors, define and implement a plan to provide for these needs

Reporting:

The Visayas Private Practice Specialist will report directly to the PRISM's Regional Operations Director or his designee, who will be responsible for monitoring the specialist's overall performance.

Qualifications:

- Networking experience with business organizations, health provider associations, pharmaceutical industry associations, is an advantage
- Thorough knowledge, including practical experience, of private sector health services particularly FP and RH.
- Minimum of 2 years experience working with private practitioners and their associations in implementing FP or health programs.
- With expertise to coordinate and collaborate with a diverse range of practitioners in the implementation of strategies to increase FP use in the private sector.
- Demonstrated leadership working with other technical advisors, local counterparts in the public and private sectors, policy makers, and project staff.
- Exceptional interpersonal, teamwork, written and verbal communication, and supervisory skills
- Preferably resident in Cebu
- With strong business/corporate background
- Proficient in Word, Excel, Powerpoint

Interested applicants should e-mail their application letter and CV at jobs@prism.org.ph on or before 31st of December 2005. Please indicate the subject of your email as "**Position Code: PPS-V**"

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Editor **Raul O. Marcelo**
Subsection Editor **Regina Galang Reyes**

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A joyful Christmas to all

RAYMUND SOBERANO

WHETHER YOU SPEND DAYS TYPING MEMOS for someone else or signing the memos yourself, may you find joy knowing that you have done a great job. May you count the people you have caused to smile because of your service and not the number of digits in your paycheck. This season, may you realize the blessing of your job and may you use your job to spread the blessing around. Happy Christmas!

- Candy G. Villanueva, PaW contributor

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I ENJOYED CHRISTMAS for the gifts. When I had yet no children, I loved it for the after-dinner parties and drinks. Now, as a mom, I embrace Christmas for the power it has to remind everyone that we are loved (solo *Pasko* myths be damned!), and we are love. May all our Christmases be filled with this power, and the beauty and peace it brings.

- Gina Abuyuan, Columnist, Working Mom

TO OUR DEAR READERS: MAY you always be blessed with opportunities that will bring you closer to your highest goals. Have a meaningful Christmas and a blessed New Year.

- Imelda Morales Aznar, PaW contributor

FIRST OF ALL, THANK YOU, DEAR READERS FOR YOUR ENTHUSIASM, for going out of your way to let us know you like our column. Now, my Christmas wish for you is: I wish you enough. I wish you enough love, enough joy, enough beauty, enough peace, enough of everything you need like food, clothes, pocket money, popcorn at the movies … enough challenges, enough friends, enough enemies, enough trials, enough humor, enough of everything, really! This assures you that you will never want in good things, and that you will always see the good in bad things. What more can you want? Enough said. Smile!

- Teresa Reyes Tunay, Columnist, Reflections for the Working Soul

CHRISTMAS IS CELEBRATING GOD'S love for each one of us and the whole world. May we truly experience this divine love amidst our daily cares and anxieties and in the joys and excitement of this season. May we likewise share this love to everyone we work and live with so that our home, workplace and society, will radiate with love, peace and true happiness!

-Bishop Precioso Cantillas, Columnist, Reflections for the Working Soul

EVERY CHRISTMAS IS SPECIAL. IT REMINDS us that God loves us immensely. He willingly assumed human form, so that He can bring on earth the culture of heaven. He taught and lived that "we should love one another as He loved us" ready to give our lives for one another.

On His birth anniversary, I wish all of our readers, blessings and graces as we add another year to our holy journey. Let us banish anxiety, worry and selfishness. May you have the gifts of the Christ Child of peace, love and joy!

- Tita Datu Puangco, Columnist, Advice for the Anxious Person at Work

CHRISTMAS IS ALWAYS A JOYFUL SEASON, regardless of our particular economic situation. We don't have to have money during Christmas to be happy. Some people enjoy receiving gifts but many more enjoy giving gifts.

We, at People at Work, find joy in giving the gift of ourselves throughout the year in the form of advice to people with concerns, problems and issues related to their work and careers and to relationships at work and at home that need mending. We like to think that God is using us as a channel of His grace; He has filled us with wisdom and equipped us with learnings from the "school of hard knocks" so that we can be "wounded healers" to others. As He had healed us and "bound up our wounds," so also He uses our wounds as means of healing for others. Truly, God is all-wise, all-knowing, all-seeing and, above all, all-loving and all-merciful.

Let us look forward with expectant faith as He manifests His love, mercy and faithfulness in 2006 to us as individuals, as families and as a nation.

-Josie O. Santamaria, Columnist, Ask Your Career Counselor

PEOPLE at Work columnists: (seated from left) Josie Santamaria, Ernie Cecilia and Regina Galang Reyes (standing from left) Teresa Reyes Tunay, Bishop Precioso Cantillas and Tita Datu Puangco

IN BIRTH, THERE IS JOY. IN THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD Jesus, we have the greatest joy. When He decided to join us in our humanity, He has ensured our salvation for He is the Way, the Truth and the Light. As we meander along on this earth, we often ask ourselves these questions: Are we on the right path and not on some twisted road? Are we living a life of truth and not lies? Are we clear on what we have to do on this earth and not confused on the reason for our existence? Life seems too short for us to be able to answer these questions. But He provided the answers to us in 33 short years, answers for all of humanity for all time.

Thus, as we celebrate Christmas, let us celebrate this season with the greatest joy and with the comforting knowledge that with His birth, he has given meaning to our lives.

I wish all our dear readers—people at work and job-seekers alike—a very joyful and meaningful Christmas!

- Regina Galang Reyes, PaW editor

THANK YOU FOR READING. Hope our writings have inspired and encouraged you. Wishing you a peaceful and meaningful Christmas. May you find joy, prosperity and fulfillment in the New Year.

- Raissa Rivera Falgui, PaW contributor

CONTINUE DREAMING AND believing in your dreams. You can't have a dream come true unless you first have a dream. But wake up and act your dreams, for that's the only way to realize them. Have a truly happy New Year!

- Ernie Cecilia, Columnist, Ask Your Career Counselor

WHEREVER CHRISTMAS FINDS YOU this year—retrenched, fired, resigned, retired, or still employed—be sure to rejoice! For the Savior has come to give meaning to all of work and life! Because of Christmas, we can look with hope to the year ahead. Merry Christmas!

- Loree Cruz-Mante, PaW contributor

HAVE A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS AND MAY THE NEW YEAR BRING you all much joy and hope. Although times may be hard, let us not forget to look up to the Lord for guidance in everything we do. Remember too that Jesus is the reason for the season so let's celebrate with thanksgiving despite the negative things happening around us. After all, we Filipinos are known for our steadfast spirit that allows us to bounce back from any adversity. God bless us all!

- Ruth M. Floresca, PaW contributor

WHETHER IT WAS A GOOD YEAR OR A BAD year for us, let's not forget to be thankful that in spite of everything, we still remain strong and unfazed no matter what. Have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

- Tere Cruz, PaW editorial assistant

Christmas lessons for the retrenched

By Loree Cruz-Mante
Contributor

NO VACANCY
NO VAC

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

RETRENCHMENT AND Christmas do not seem to go well together. The happy, celebrative spirit of the season is apparently incompatible with the obviously grim reality of unemployment. One client told me, after he was notified that he was being let go: "This will be the saddest, bleakest and most horrifying Christmas I will ever have." Such statement might be judged as hopelessly without faith, but it is easy to see how one who is retrenched at Christmastime can think this way. Being let go at any time of year is bad enough, but it is more pronounced if it happens during the season of good cheer.

Grieving at Christmastime

But as is always true with the seasons of life, retrenchment at this time of the year may yet prove to be one of those life-saving ambiguities. Hard as it may be to understand why one must grieve while everyone else is rejoicing, retrenchment at Christmastime is not automatically a cause for desperation. The message of hope is far too encompassing to miss out on those who are in pain during this time.

May I suggest three lessons that can be gleaned from the Christmas story.

No room at the inn

The Biblical account in Luke tells us that "...there was no room for them (Mary and Joseph) in the inn." Isn't this what it is like to be let go? "There is no more room for you in this company," goes the modern translation of the Christmas story.

Mary and Joseph were not only two travelers badly needing a place to rest. Mary was heavy with child. They came a long way from home, not on some Airbus-380 or an air-conditioned train coach or a leather-upholstered limousine. She came on a donkey, and he on foot. They traveled thousands of miles. They were very tired. They also badly needed a place for the baby to be born. They would do anything to find a place to rest.

Similarly, the retrenched are out in the cold, with "no room ... in the inn." Life will not be put on hold because one is retrenched. The bills must still be paid, the children kept in school. But, as Mary and Joseph had shown, persistence eventually found a way. They did find a spot, even though it was not what they initially sought. They did not lose the faith, knowing that the prophecy must be fulfilled. The Messiah would be born, as had been foretold.

There is a future laid out for the retrenched, for you, even though it seems that such future is hazy at the moment. The plan for the Messiah to come must and was fulfilled. And so will His plan for each one, retrenched or not.

You only need to persist through the transition process, which includes assessing yourself, sending out resumés, getting interviewed. Like what happened to Mary and Joseph, there will be room somewhere. It may not be the career or workplace you may have expected. As in the Christmas story, the way will be pointed out somehow. You just need to persist in the search.

Following the star

The three Wise Men did not have information beyond the star that guided them to the newborn Savior. They did not have a map, compass, or heat-sensing device. All they had was a star.

But a star was really all they needed. Add to that, faith in God's plan, courage to trust, daring to risk the journey, and above all, willingness to be led.

Are not faith, courage, daring, and willingness the very same things that a retrenched employee needs to have? Who can really tell what career is right, except as one is led to it by a star? That star may include single-mindedness and focus in looking for a career, which you consider ideal and which best fits you. Beyond that, there is the faith that you will be led to the right place. Many job searchers miss out on this truth simply because they rely too much on their own resources. There is a star that shines for each one of us. Some people just don't recognize it and refuse to be led by it.

The Wise Men followed the star, according to Biblical account. You, too, can arrive safely just by following your star.

Glory to God

There was much rejoicing that Christmas morn. The rejoicing was centered on the real cause: the birth of the Savior. It did not matter that He was born in a stable. It did not matter that Mary and Joseph could not find a room at the inn. Only one thing mattered: that Jesus, the one who would save the world, was born.

So what if you can't afford to buy the gifts you used to give away? So what if you can't be as reckless with your spending? So what if you don't have a job this Christmas? So what if you have to look for one after the season?

The real cause for celebration remains. The Savior is born. If only for this fact, then you must rejoice!

Christmas pressures

Our present-day Christmas celebration unduly taxes all of us to conform to consumerism, indulgence, and a misguided emphasis on nonessentials. Losing a job at this time, then, somewhat prevents the retrenched from participating in the highly commercialized and expensive drift of Christmas gift-giving and merrymaking. This fact highlights the incompatible tug of Christmas spending with the retrenched's desire to hold on to precious cash.

You can be sucked in by all the hype; that is, if you allow it. The message of the Christmas story is precisely about essentials: a manger for a bed, hay for a pillow, both the mighty kings and lowly shepherds for guests, the Savior of the world wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. These paint a paradoxical image of a helpless child and a Mighty King.

Paradox of Christmas

In this paradox lies the hope of the Christmas story. Amidst the reality of being retrenched during this season of hope lies the message of Christmas for the retrenched: Persist even when there is no room at the inn. Follow your star. Give glory to God in the highest!

This Christmas may yet be the most meaningful for you, its message more poignant than in all Christmases past. It's time to relish those really critical essentials that keep hope vital and alive, essentials which too much buying, eating, and merrymaking try to eclipse out of the real message of the season. Don't miss out on the chance to cherish this Christmas because next year you will most likely have found a job. Having gone through a value-laden essential Christmas this year, you will prefer it to the one you used to have when you had a job.

Have a good one this year!

(Ms Mante is a career consultant with a leading transitions management firm, Drake Beam Morin Philippines. E-mail her at lcmante@yahoo.com.).

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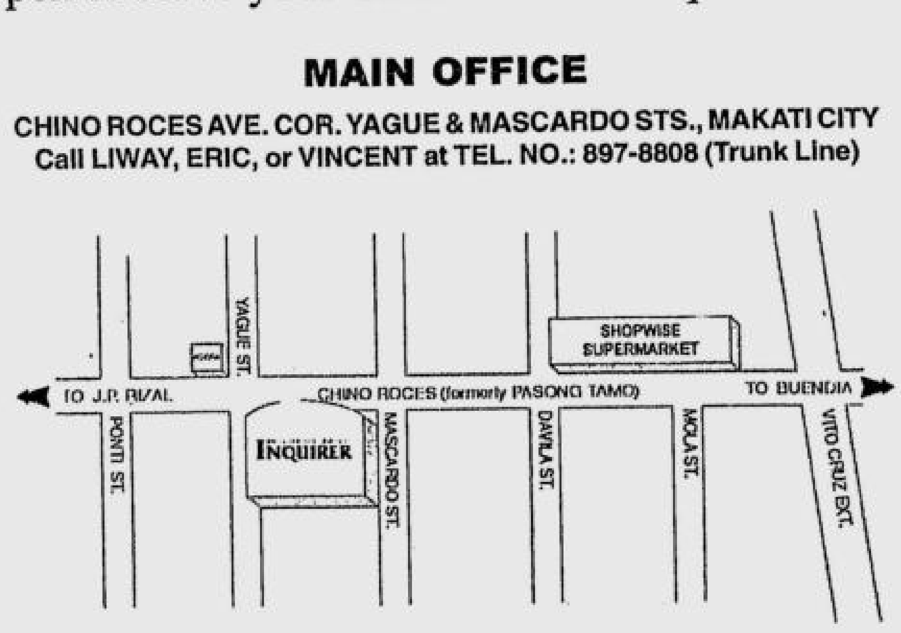

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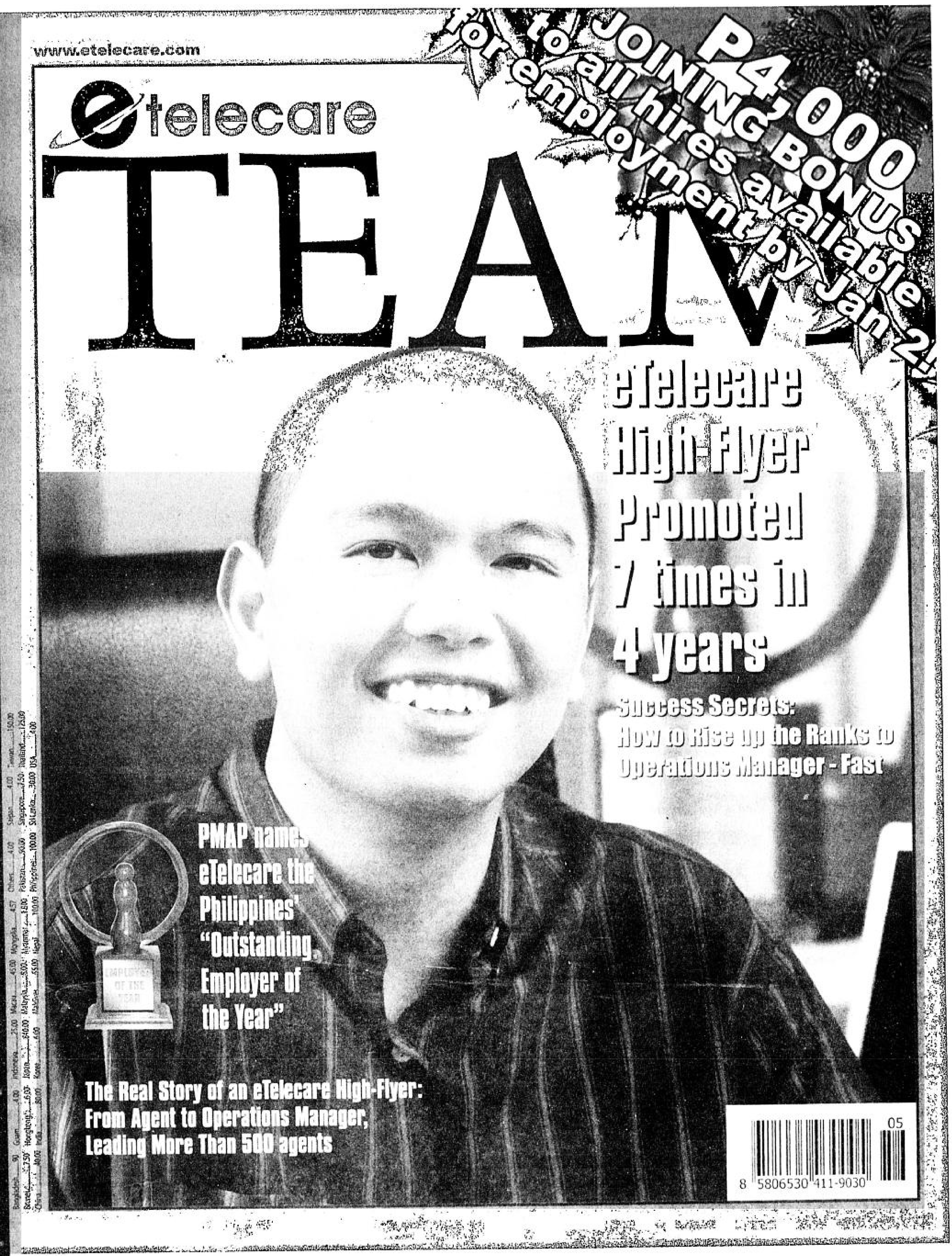

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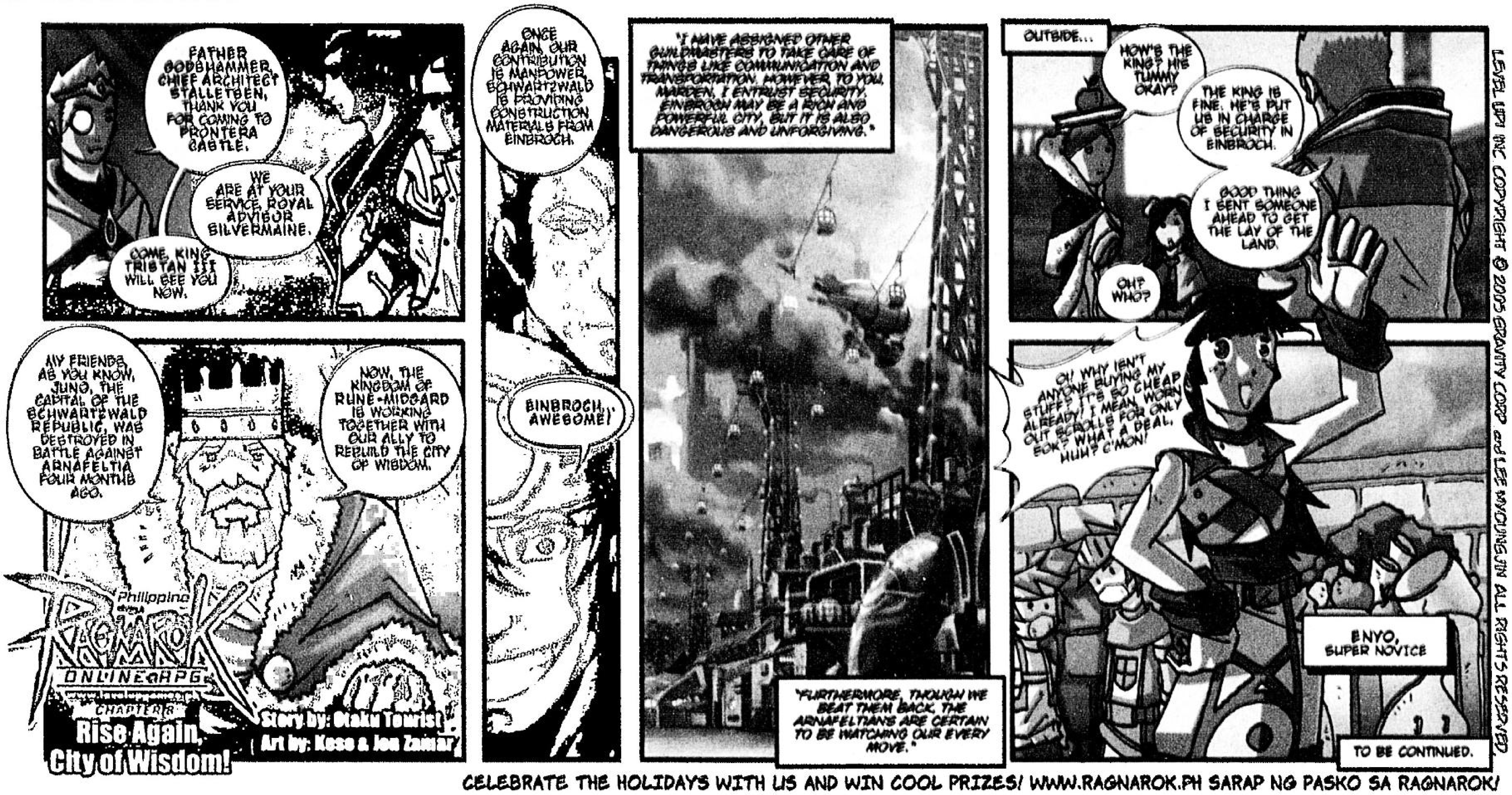
RAGNAROK

BY LEVEL UP GAMES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COME, KING TRISTAN III WILL SEE YOU NOW.
MY FRIENDS, AS YOU KNOW, JUNO, THE CAPITAL OF THE SCHWARTZWALD REPUBLIC, WAS DESTROYED IN BATTLE AGAINST ARNAFELTIA FOUR MONTHS AGO.
NOW, THE KINGDOM OF RUNE-MIDGARD IS WORKING TOGETHER WITH OUR ALLY TO REBUILD THE CITY OF WISDOM.
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CHAPTER 8
Rise Again, City of Wisdom!
Story by: Otaku Tourist
Art by: Koso & Jon Zamar
ONCE AGAIN, OUR CONTRIBUTION IS MANPOWER. SCHWARTZWALD IS PROVIDING CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS FROM EINBROCH.
EINBROCH... AWESOME!
"I HAVE ASSIGNED OTHER GUILDMASTERS TO TAKE CARE OF THINGS LIKE COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION. HOWEVER, TO YOU, MARDEN, I ENTRUST SECURITY. EINBROCH MAY BE A RICH AND POWERFUL CITY, BUT IT IS ALSO DANGEROUS AND UNFORGIVING."
"FURTHERMORE, THOUGH WE BEAT THEM BACK, THE ARNAFELTIANS ARE CERTAIN TO BE WATCHING OUR EVERY MOVE."
OUTSIDE...
HOW'S THE KING? HIS TUMMY OKAY?
THE KING IS FINE. HE'S PUT US IN CHARGE OF SECURITY IN EINBROCH.
GOOD THING I SENT SOMEONE AHEAD TO GET THE LAY OF THE LAND.
OH? WHO?
OI! WHY ISN'T ANYONE BUYING MY STUFF? IT'S SO CHEAP ALREADY! I MEAN, WORN OUT SCROLLS FOR ONLY 80K? WHAT A DEAL, HUH? C'MON!
ENYO, SUPER NOVICE
TO BE CONTINUED.
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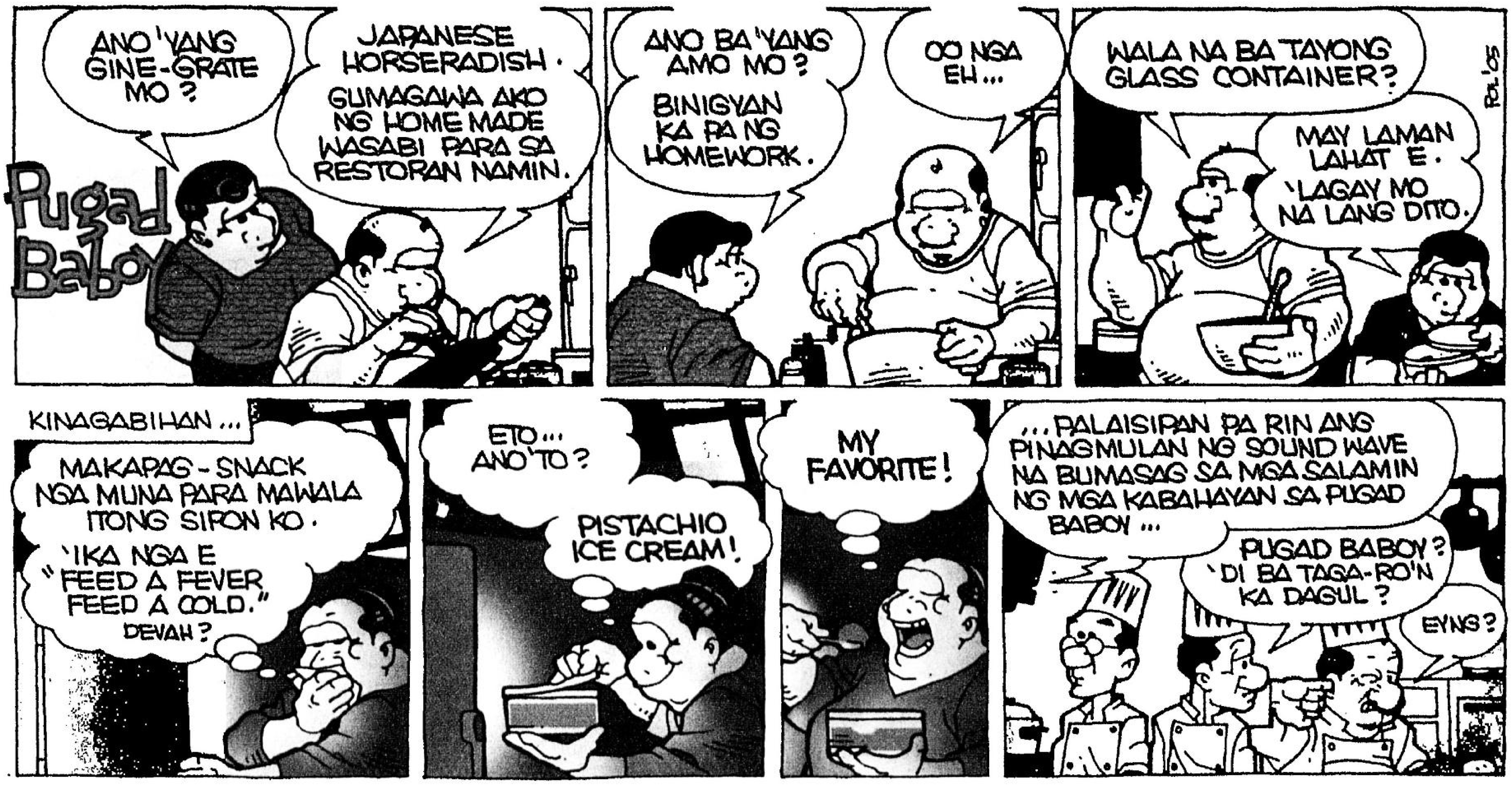
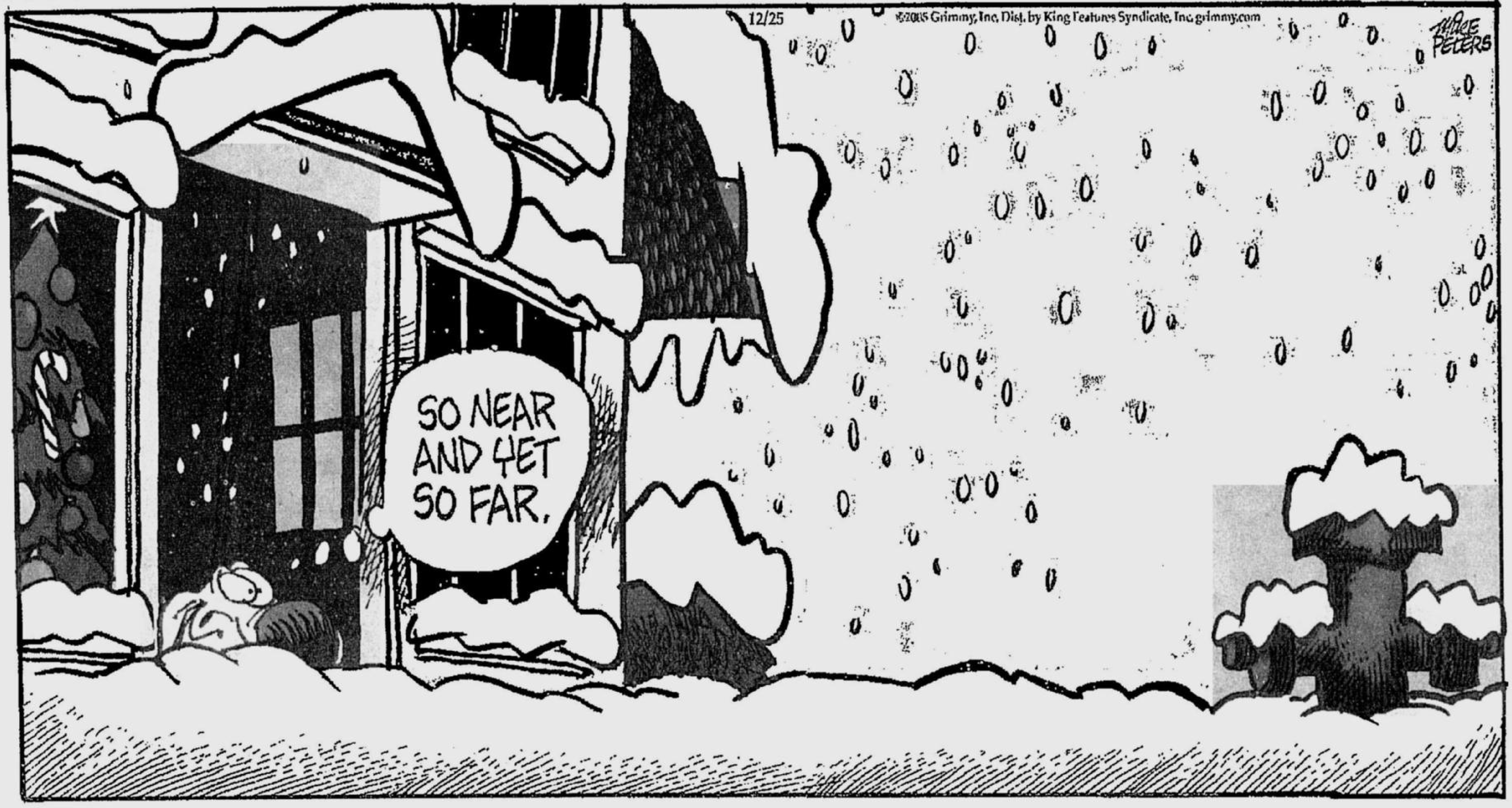
BY POL MEDINA JR.


Pugad Baboy
ANO 'YANG GINE-GRATE MO?
JAPANESE HORSERADISH. GUMAGAWA AKO NG HOME MADE WASABI PARA SA RESTORAN NAMIN.
ANO BA 'YANG AMO MO? BINIGYAN KA PA NG HOMEWORK.
OO NGA EH...
WALA NA BA TAYONG GLASS CONTAINER?
MAY LAMAN LAHAT E. 'LAGAY MO NA LANG DITO.
POL '05
KINAGABIHAN...
MAKAPAG-SNACK NGA MUNA PARA MAWALA ITONG SIPON KO. 'IKA NGA E "FEED A FEVER FEED A COLD." DEVAH?
ETO... ANO 'TO?
PISTACHIO ICE CREAM!
MY FAVORITE!
...PALAISIPAN PA RIN ANG PINAGMULAN NG SOUND WAVE NA BUMASAG SA MGA SALAMIN NG MGA KABAHAYAN SA PUGAD BABOY...
PUGAD BABOY? 'DI BA TAGA-RO'N KA DAGUL?
EYNS?

MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


12/25
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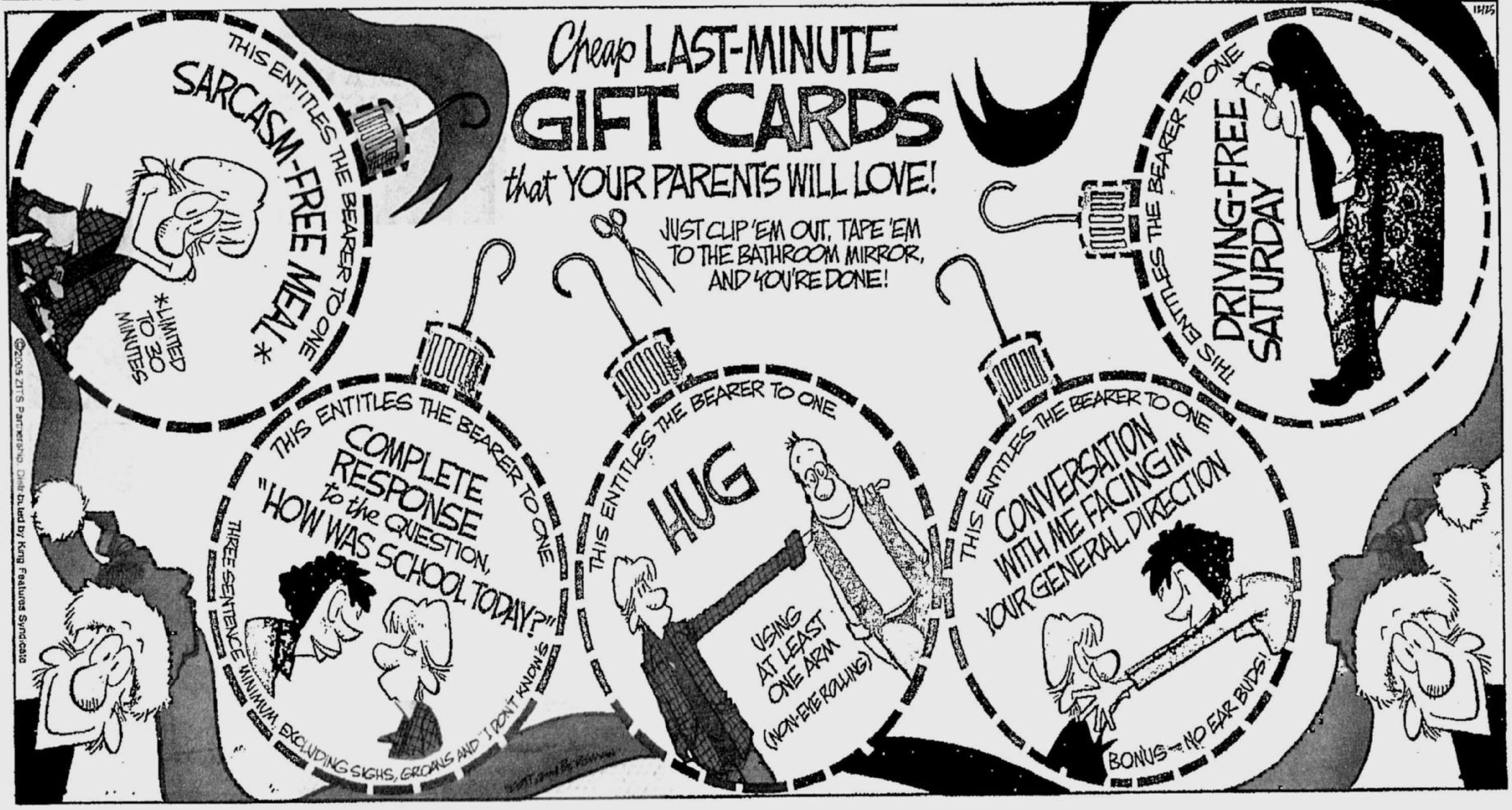
MIKE PETERS
SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR.

ZITS

BY JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN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BONUS – NO EAR BUDS!
THIS ENTITLES THE BEARER TO ONE DRIVING-FREE SATURDAY
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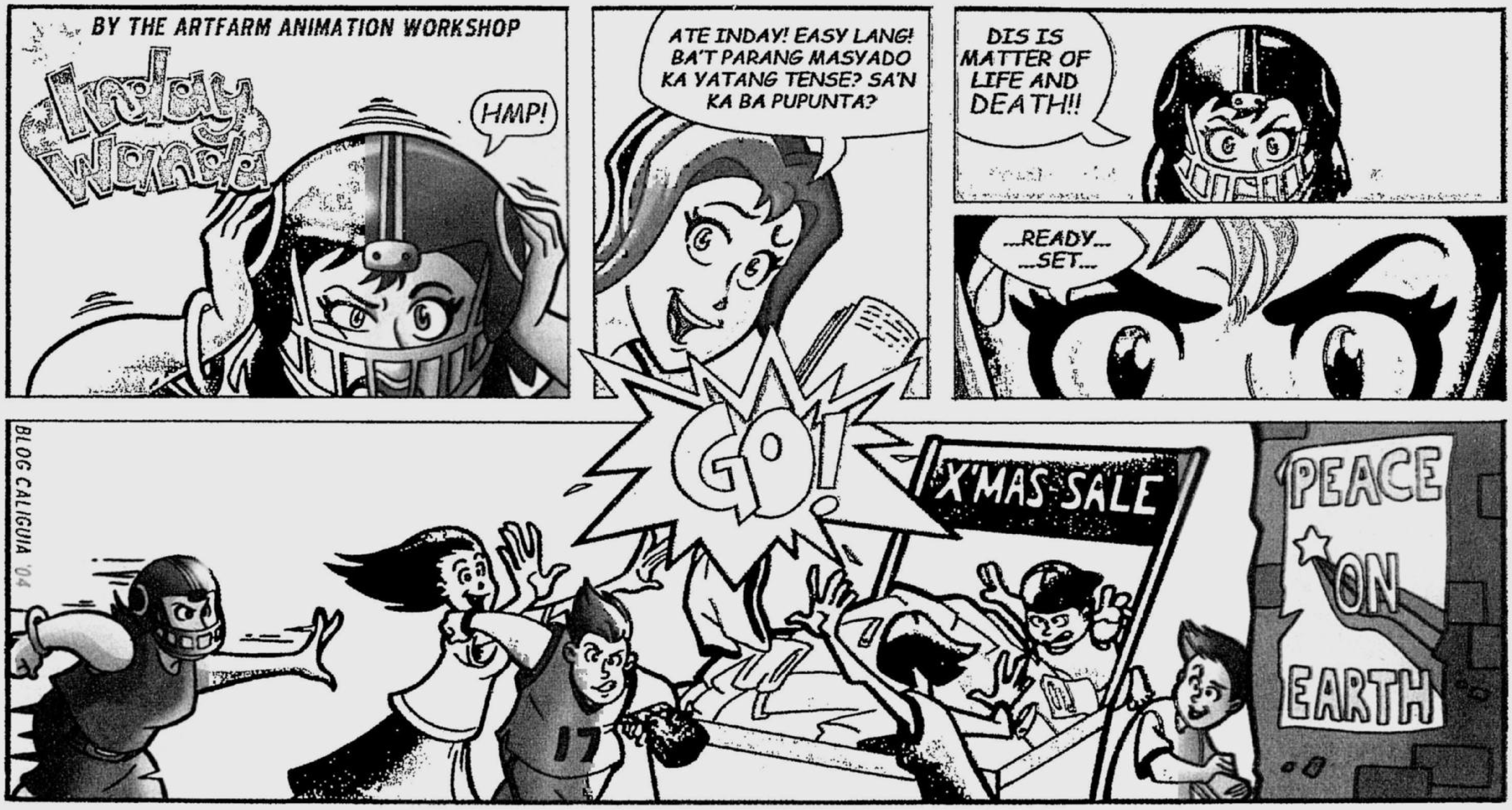
SCOTT and BORGMAN

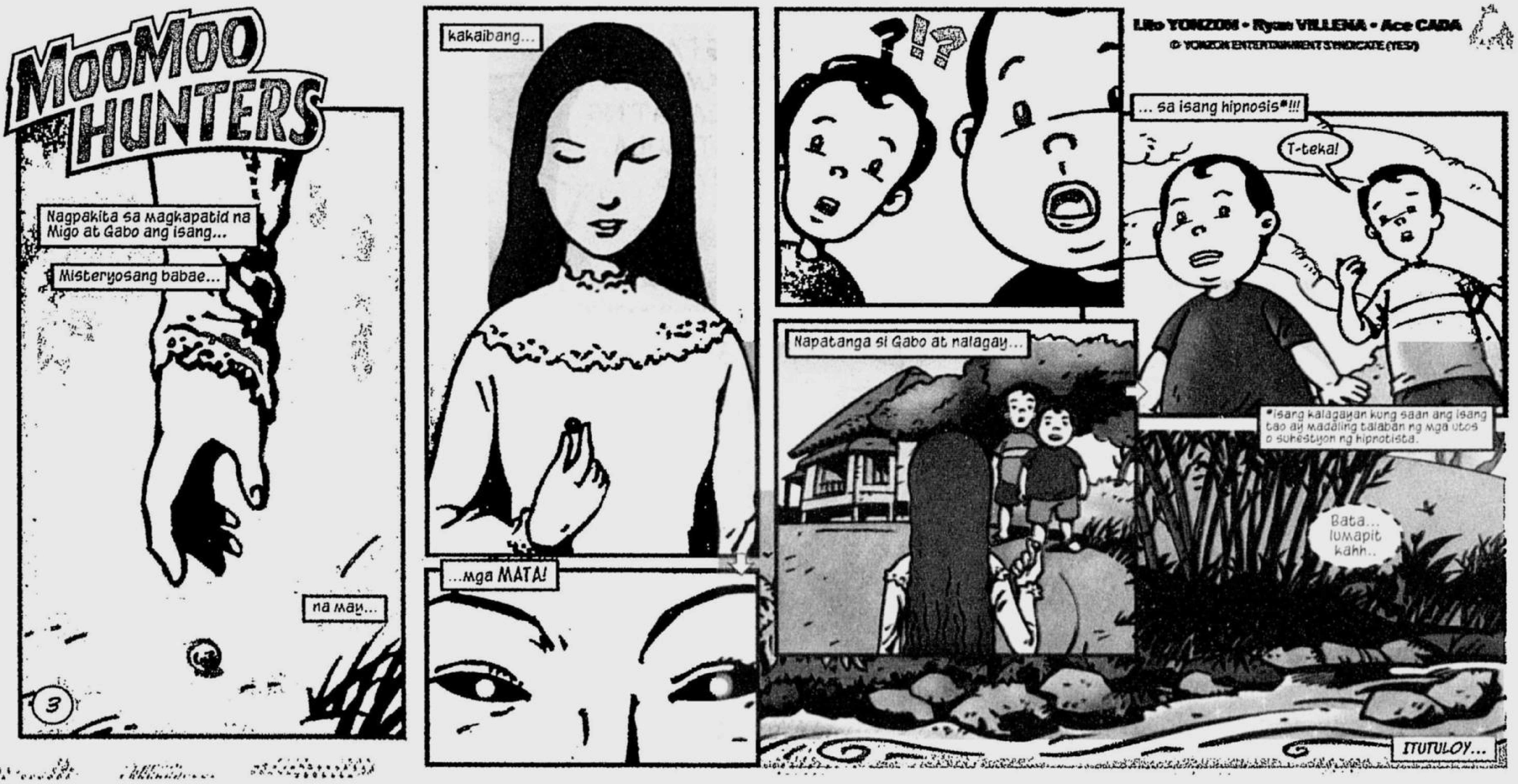
INDAY WANDA

BY BLOG CALIGUIA


BY THE ARTFARM ANIMATION WORKSHOP
Inday Wanda
HMP!
ATE INDAY! EASY LANG! BA'T PARANG MASYADO KA YATANG TENSE? SA'N KA BA PUPUNTA?
DIS IS MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!!
...READY... ...SET...
GO!
X'MAS SALE
PEACE ON EARTH
17
BLOG CALIGUIA '04

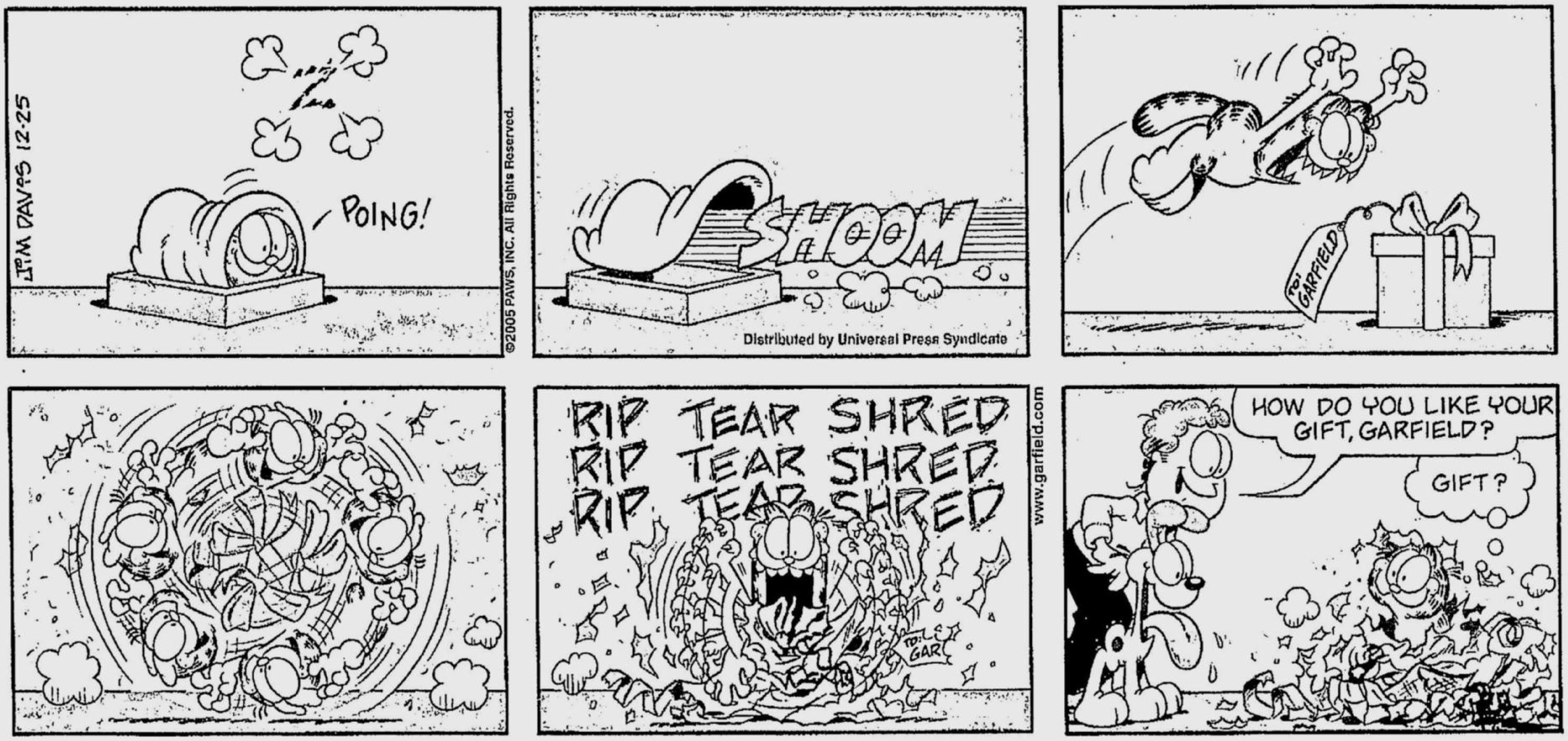
MOOMOO HUNTERS

BY MANGO COMICS


MooMoo HUNTERS
Lito YONZON • Ryan VILLENA • Ace CADA
© YONZON ENTERTAINMENT SYNDICATE (YES!)
Nagpakita sa magkapatid na Migo at Gabo ang isang...
Misteryosang babae...
na may...
3
kakaibang...
...mga MATA!
?!?
Napatanga si Gabo at nalagay...
... sa isang hipnosis*!!!
T-teka!
*Isang kalagayan kung saan ang isang tao ay madaling talaban ng mga utos o suhestiyon ng hipnotista.
Bata... lumapit kahh..
ITUTULOY...

GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


JIM DAVIS 12-25
POING!
SHOOM
TO: GARFIELD
RIP TEAR SHRED
RIP TEAR SHRED
RIP TEAR SHRED
TO: GAR
HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR GIFT, GARFIELD?
GIFT?

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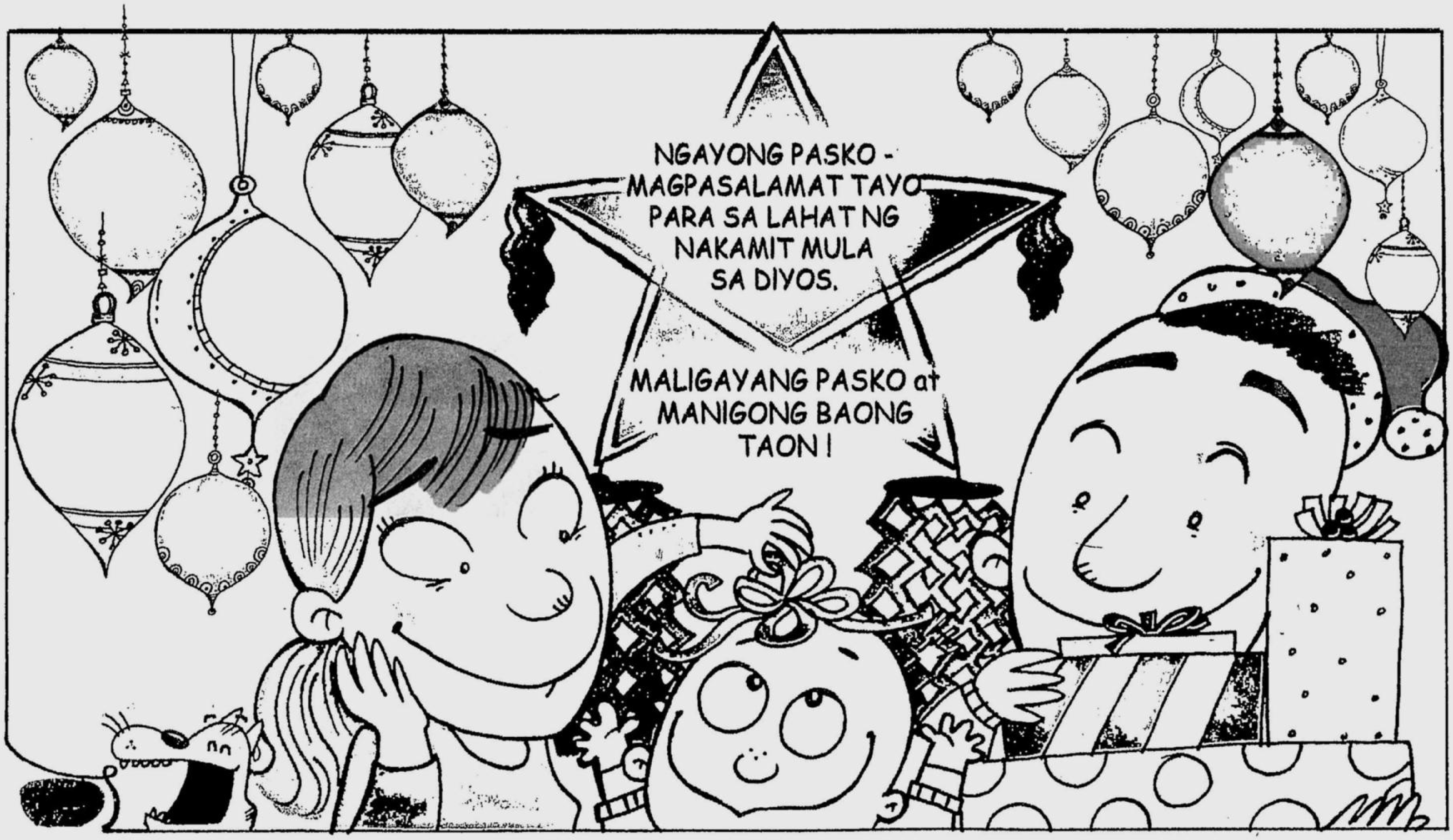
FULL HOUSE

BY STEPH BRAVO


NGAYONG PASKO - MAGPASALAMAT TAYO PARA SA LAHAT NG NAKAMIT MULA SA DIYOS.
MALIGAYANG PASKO at MANIGONG BAONG TAON!

December 25, 2005
GET TO KNOW SOME REAL PEOPLE
Sunday INQUIRER magazine

Angels HELPED Fr. Ben FIND A PLACE AT THE INN

From a young parish priest to a shepherd of lost youth, Fr. Ben Villote has always given all he had. Now all that good has returned, as a slew of donors has given his Center for Migrant Youth a new home, allowing the charismatic priest, writer and minister to continue his blessed work

text and photograph
by Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

AFTER 23 years, Fr. Ruben J. Villote's Center for Migrant Youth (CMY) had to move out of its old address. But there was no place, no money. Like the lost youth to whom it ministers, the CMY suddenly found itself homeless.

Then angels came. Indeed, Christmas happens every day, any day.

This season, the subject is angels for Fr. Ben, founder of the 23-year-old CMY, shepherd to the least and the lost, friend to seekers and doers, writer, brother, priest,

"Erps" cannot help waxing seraphic, because once again, he has experienced God's providence through individuals known and unknown to him. Angels, he calls them, and keeps telling people about them.

("Erps" is short for *erpat*, Filipino slang for father or the Latin pater. That is how the young fondly address Fr. Villote or Fr. Ben.)

As it was in the beginning, so now it is happening again. God, with ordinary persons as conduit, cannot be outdone in generosity, proof of love and hope come alive. Proof that CMY and the ministry among the poor lost youth of the city will go on. Proof that the small community of believers who have been praying and working together with Fr. Ben all these years will continue to thrive.

Only the address and phone number will change. But this is getting ahead of the story.

Home to the lost

From the outside, the place looked like any home: a modest bungalow surrounded by trees, the quiet broken once in a while by voices and the sound of guitars.

CMY on Cordillera St. Quezon City was home to young men who had come to the big city in search of something. Some got lost or strayed into unfamiliar, terrifying terrain; others did not know what to do and couldn't find their way back home or what they were looking for.

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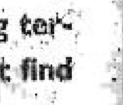
A Vet For All Creatures, *p. 3*

A Multitalented Girl Named Girl, *p. 8*



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I Have a Crush on an Italian Tenor

When I grow tired of rubbing the ends of my memories
together to ignite the fire for poems, I put on headphones,
slip into walking shoes and out the garden gate. On the crest
of every note, the heart's pulse flutters *con moto agitato* then
andante with feeling. The tenor's voice pours into my ear

so even without translation, I know the sinuous syllables
mean desire: *no one else but you, baby; forever, yours only,*
undying love and devotion, as I walk through the countryside
fragrant with wild onion and bee balm. So what if I swoon
unbecomingly like a teenager over this blind minstrel?

When I grow even older, I'll dream about being in a hotel
room in a foreign country, preferably someplace I have never
been, like Morocco or Italy: a fountain will splash over bright-
colored tiles in a patio, and the scent of lemon and verbena
coil like another embrace around me, in bed with

a handsome stranger who I'll find looks just like my father.
Someone once said, what a woman really needs is a man
who looks out for her welfare, one who can carry
a stimulating conversation, clean the bathroom and take out
the trash, be sensitive to her every need and of course be

good in bed—and that it is so important all five men
don't know each other. A friend from graduate school
says what we really want is a truck driver with a Ph.D.
The so-called moral of the story is shocking to some,
perhaps even immoral. But when you think about

the souls in *The Symposium*, separated from each other
and condemned to yearn eternally for what completes them
and makes them whole, you can begin to understand
the difficulty. Not everyone can fulfill such a dizzying
array of needs, and for one person only. It's hard enough

to figure out who it is we were meant to be with—and yet
we point and say we choose, we say I choose you. Would it be
enough to recognize which of our most important needs are met
by our mates, and delegate the rest, to coffee shop friends,
email buddies, jobs, hobbies, therapists; to running, reading,

writing, yoga, or massage therapy. Sometimes it is at
the hands of a complete stranger that the spine gentles
and relaxes on the linen-draped table. The head droops,
the shoulders slacken, the ribs exhale a longer breath.
And the back, all this time locked tightly in its habit of not

giving anything away, responds to the fingers
of the blind masseuse, in the same way the tenor sings
so ardently of a world he still desires, can still taste and feel,
though he can no longer see. Any stone would melt
like a heart, from the honey of even such imperfect love.

Luisa A. Igloria

Dahil Ibig Kitang Kilalanin

tugon kay Elynia Mabanglo

Dahil ibig kitang kilalanin
Handa akong lampasan ang guhit ng mahugis mong balat,
Liliparin ko ang lawak ng iyong titig at isip
Upang kalasin ang sumbat ng kahapon mo at bukas.

Dahil ibig kitang kilalanin
Susunduin kita sa iyong himlayang dilim
Kahit pa nakaabang ang kayraming banta at panganib,
Lilikhain natin ang mga bagong gunita,
Ibabangon kita upang kapwa tayo maging malaya.

Isang pag-ibig na taos ang aking iaalay,
Tahanang tahimik na kanlungan ng mga pangarap,
Ikaw ang tanglaw ng aking pag-iral at pakikipagsapalaran,
Iaalay ko sa iyo ang pinakamalayong bituin
Dahil mahal kita't ibig pang kilalanin.

Dahil ibig kitang kilalanin,
Sisisirin kita hanggang sa iyong pandama,
Papailanlang ako maging sa iyong panaginip at lungkot—
Doon walang humpay kitang iibigin
Dahil itinakda ako maging sa iyo magpakailanman.

Genaro R. Gojo Cruz

ERRATUM: In the article "On This Stage, Eagles Learn How To Love Life and Dare Fly Higher," (SIM, 18 December 2005), Pedro Jose "Peej" Bernardo, the Ateneo Law valedictorian, is still waiting for the results of the bar exams, expected to come out in March.

Fr. Ben

...from page 1

Fr. Ben set up CMY as a temporary shelter for these young city migrants. Here they could live in community, share, learn, work, pray, be cleansed, grow and become men for others.

Countless youths have passed through CMY. Many came hurt and aimless, angry and alone, wounded and desperate. Many left healed and whole, ready to find their places in the world and enrich others along the way. One even gave up his life to save someone.

Father Ben describes CMY life thus: "Every one goes through a values formation and skills training program. This prepares the youth for a useful and meaningful life. We rescue them from a life of destitution and despair by helping them to win back what they have lost in terms of self-esteem."

The young, Fr. Ben says, are led to situations where they can experience what it means to be affirmed, to trust and be trusted in return. They learn to be generous, to give and receive affirmation and reverence. "To be the best they could ever be for the future."

After 23 years on Cordillera St., CMY has moved to 15 Goldman St. East Fairview, also in QC. (tel. no. 428-6529). Nothing has changed except the look and the size of the dwelling and, of course, the neighbors.

Last December 11, Fr. Ben quietly blessed the bare new CMY home with only the residents and a few supporters in attendance. On December 17, CMY opened with a Holy Mass for a bigger crowd composed of old friends and new neighbors. After the mass, Bishop Antonio Tobias, who came unobtrusively in a casual get-up, welcomed Fr. Ben (whom he mistakenly addressed as "Monsignor") to his diocese. Just call me "Erps," Fr. Ben could have said.

The old place has been returned to the generous Zafra-Reyes family that had provided CMY with a home free of charge for more than two decades. Leaving was a bittersweet experience for CMY as well as for its community of supporters but all good things do not have to end; it must continue and flourish.

Slowing down

Fr. Ben, who has been writing "The Word" for this magazine, also rues that he can no longer continue spreading God's Word through his column. At 73, he has decided to slow down, he adds.

Those who miss "The Word" can always turn to the published compilations, among them, "A Clown Among Many" and "Empowered by His Wounds," available at CMY and Claretian Publications. The pieces sound as inspiring and fresh as the day they were written.

Moving on was not as easy as the CMY family thought. In March, when Fr. Ben decided it was time, there was no place in sight, no money. The mounting anxiety took its toll and landed him in the hospital. "O, ye of little faith," must have rang in his ears and his fellow anxious. To make a long story short, "the angels came."

"Erps" as a young graduate of San Jose Seminary, Class of 1959

They literally came from nowhere. "I did not know them, I did not know their names," Fr. Ben says. But word about Fr. Ben's good works had spread to the four winds. And the angels heard. These persons, foreigners living abroad and a Filipino from here, made possible the purchase of the Fairview house and lot. The locals were just as generous with their "time, talent and treasure."

Nine months after the "crisis," the new CMY was ready for occupancy even as more angels continue to fly in to build on what had been begun 23 years ago.

CMY is the Church in a small way. It is community. People come together not only to worship but to heal and be healed, to forgive and to be forgiven, to be simply happy.

It is not only Fr. Ben, his co-workers and the migrant youth at CMY who define the community. The non-migrants and non-youth, friends and fellow travelers are welcome most especially on Sundays to take part in the Eucharistic celebration. And of course, always, to partake of the Filipino potluck *salu-salo* (agape). The simplest repast becomes a banquet.

The kindness of strangers

CMY is not an island unto itself. It relies on the kindness of friends and strangers. There is a happy close-knit (but never exclusive) group of about 20 warm bodies from all walks of life that Fr. Ben could count on and who count on him to be their shepherd. His "mini-parish," in other words.

(One cannot mention or quote just a few and exclude the rest. For now, we let Fr. Ben take center stage.)

CMY is a special ministry established under the archdiocese of Manila that then included Quezon City during the time of the late Jaime Cardinal Sin. "It is our Mother the Church offering her presence to her wounded and defenseless children," Fr. Ben explains. "This is the specific place where I am being called to meet Christ in the poor, and where I am invited to share His poverty and shame."

He describes the CMY ministry as similar to that of the Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 who are well to look for the one who is lost. It is always a special day when a former CMY resident comes back to talk about his new life. Many have gone on to become caring individuals. Their success is measured not in terms of financial returns but in the way they live their lives.

Unlike what one sees in many packed churches on Sundays where people keep to themselves, seemingly oblivious to what is going on, masses at CMY are intimate and interactive. This has always been the mark of the parishes where Fr. Ben had worked. His homilies are simple but deep. He speaks softly and sparingly but carries a big message.

A young priest

In the 1970s people went all the way to Tipas, Taguig to experience the liturgy with its glorious music and to interact with the fisherfolk. The indigenous color was hard to miss. After Tipas, Fr. Ben was assigned to a small parish in Punta, Sta. Ana in Manila where the parishioners were mostly factory workers. Again, the masses burst into life.

Before all these, he was assistant pastor in a couple of parishes. But it was really in the University of the Philippines' Parish of the Holy Sacrifice that Fr. Ben first broke ground as a young priest. There he experienced the exuberance and activism of the young as well as the challenge of intellectual life.

Raised in pre-war Tondo, Manila, Fr. Ben studied in public schools and later went to the Jesuit-run San Jose Seminary for diocesan priests. How he idolized his Jesuit mentors. He belongs to Class 1959 and was ordained that same year. "We carry the marks of Christ's Passion in our bodies," the "Josefino" says of his class of four. "Proof of the paschal holocaust we have had to offer through many years as victim-priests on the altar of the Master."

Even as the joy of Christmas envelops CMY, Fr. Ben looks beyond and reminds: "We must gradually move away from the sweet and pious rituals of the First Coming of Christ. We must journey towards the more radical and painful work of renewing the world and restoring all things in Christ so that justice and righteousness may begin to prevail in the New Heaven and the New Earth—as a sign of the Second Coming."

May the deepest message of Christ's coming come alive. *Isang Makabuluhan at Makahulugang Pasko!*

A special ministry: Erps, center front, with wards of CMY, circa 1996

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

by Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz
photographs by Rodel Rotoni

For This Trailblazing Liquor Exec, women Do Have A Place in Business

Women were up in arms against her company's controversial liquor ad. Yet, ironically, Olivia Limpe-Aw, one of seven sisters, had to prove that "daughters are as good as sons" when she took over as the first woman president of Destileria Limtuaco

NAPOLEON
TOSKA VODKA
WHITE CASTLE
MARIA CLARA
SANGRIA
NAPOLEON BRANDY
KUNG FU

IGHT unseen, it would be so easy to hate this woman who, faced with so much public condemnation, still refused to withdraw a liquor ad that several quarters had described as exploitative of women and children.

But finally meeting Destileria Limtuaco & Co.President Olivia Limpe-Aw provokes even more questions: How can one so young and hip harbor such outdated views on women? Or, given her business background, how can a woman who has successfully hurdled the odds in a male-dominated company show such meager sense of sisterhood?

Indeed, the woman behind the controversial *Quince Años* billboard that sobered up the local advertising industry last year seems like a walking mass of contradictions. Fortunately, rather than gloss over what was essentially unpleasant business, Limpe-Aw is vocal and forthcoming in discussing the issue.

"I did it on principle," she says of the episode that had women's groups, church organizations, several politicians and the Advertising Board dashing off letters and petitions calling for the pullout of the ad and the boycott of Limtuaco products.

Sexist and disgusting

Put up early last year, the ad for Napoleon Brandy had the tagline "*Nakatikim ka na ba ng Quince Años*? (literally, "Have you tasted a 15-year-old")" which the women's party list group Gabriela described as "attacking women and children." A letter of protest circulated by several groups described the tagline as "sexist and disgusting," and "clearly coined for its sexual, if criminal, undertones." A radio ad of the same product had the wife confronting her husband over a 15-year-old. Both commercials, detractors contended, demeaned women by portraying them as commodities to be "tasted and sampled" by men. The ad, one group claimed, "encouraged pedophilia."

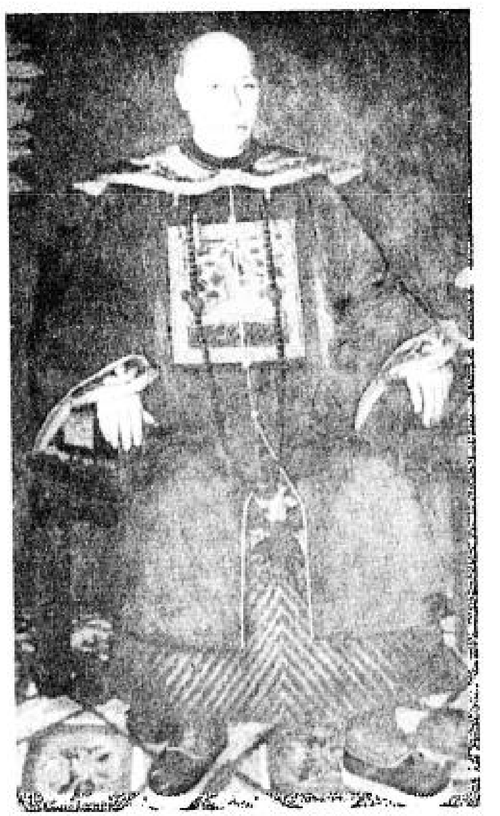
Not so, responds Limpe-Aw, who cited the absence of a woman's shot as proof that the blurb referred strictly to the liquor product. "I didn't find anything offensive about that ad," she says. "They are worse billboards out there on Edsa that show women's bodies outright." Besides, she adds, the ad was approved by the Adboard. "We went through the whole process of seeking official approval for that ad, and they're demanding our apology? For what? We did nothing wrong!"

If anything, she adds, the entire controversy was an election gimmick by some politicians and groups. "We felt the issue was only being used by some candidates to project themselves."

After several months that saw then senatorial candidate Alfredo Lim defacing one of the billboard ads, a flurry of suits and counter-suits and official censure from the Ad-Board, Destileria Limtuaco finally pulled out the ad and replaced it with a new campaign that had the blurb, "*Nakatikim na sila* (They've tasted it)!" showing four men raising their glasses in a toast.

"We wanted closure," says Limpe-Aw of their decision to finally withdraw the ad. Although she was earlier quoted as saying that the protests had made the brand a byword and boosted liquor sales, Limpe-Aw now admits that the price of "fighting on principle" has been rather steep. More than a year after the ad pullout, the company still cannot advertise because of a pending case.

"That's the standing policy of the Advertising Board," she reveals. "The Ad-Board won't issue us a clearance to air advertising materials and KBP in turn won't air any commercial without clearance."


'Sioktong' man: Lim Tua Co

Woman power: The Limpe household—(seated, from left) Linda, dad Julius, mom Lily and Patricia; (standing, from left) Joyce, Natalie, Olivia, Isabel and Irene

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bullied

But no regrets, she shrugs. "I felt our company was being used and being bullied, so I did what I thought was right. If I believe in something, I'd fight for it all the way. "

Already, she has put the experience behind her, says this first woman president of a 153-year old liquor company. She has more than just advertising feedback to worry about.

The fifth in a brood of seven daughters, Limpe-Aw and her sisters knew they faced a tough battle to take over the family business, given the Chinese's cultural preference for male heirs. "Well, I guess my father gave up trying to have one when number 7 turned out to be a girl, as well," she says of Julius Limpe, now the company's board chairman.

Fortunately, the Limpe patriarch also subscribed to the belief that "Daughters are like sons; what men can do, women can too, sometimes even better," says Limpe-Aw with a laugh. Which was how she and her sisters ended up training on the job early as in most Chinese families.

At 10, Olivia was pasting labels on liquor bottles in the distillery plant. "My father had always drilled in us the value of work and of money, and how it was to be a laborer," she recalls. "He used to say that the only difference between our workers and us was that their father just happened to be poor, but that we can't choose which family we'd be born into. Some are just luckier than others. The experience taught us humility."

From labelling bottles, the teenage Olivia graduated into errand girl or gofer, before assuming secretarial and clerical chores in high school. "I would go with my father in his business meetings and I'd just sit there, absorbing everything. I hated the long hours because I had to go to school early the next day." In college, she was promoted to cashier and later transferred to accounting where she learned to prepare vouchers. Her other sisters went through the same routine. The seven sisters ended up working in the family business except for time off during pregnancies.

Growing up, Limpe-Aw heard enough business talk to consider taking on the reins after her father retired. "My mother conditioned me to take the family business seriously. She'd tell me how four generations had put their life into it, how their efforts have blessed us with a good life and how we should continue it so future generations would be as blessed." With no other sister as keen as she was, Limpe-Aw felt it was her responsibility to keep the family outfit going.

Secret formula

Destileria Limtuaco was established by Chinese immigrant Lim Tua Co, who sailed for the Philippines in 1850. Born of a merchant family in Amoy, China, he was a Mandarin trained in martial arts who also possessed a secret formula for medicinal wine that has been with his family for five generations. Within two years of his arrival in the Philippines, the 36-year-old immigrant put the formula to good use, brewing it into a bittersweet herbal concoction at the distillery he had set up at Gandara Street in Binondo. Called Vino de Chino, the wine was known to build up stamina like today's energy drinks and became immensely popular among Filipinos, especially pregnant women, as *sioktong*.

When Limtuaco's only son Carlos died while visiting his ancestral home in

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For A Cause

by Ruel S. De Vera

For This Brave Young Vet, All Animals Deserve The Best Care

You think you like animals? Meet Dr. Nielsen Donato, who has uncanny rapport with creatures great and small

SAVE for a few plaintive whines, the dog stays perfectly still. The Miniature Schnauzer, who goes by the name Francis, needs to have the dressing on his ears changed, and Dr. Nielsen Donato speaks to both pet and owner with a deliberate, delicate cadence that is both confident and comforting.

The dog is not the only animal at Donato's clinic in the Tiendesitas complex near Ortigas Avenue. The clinic's cat, a Cornish Rex called Rex Girl, curls up next to everybody in sight (Francis included), putting forth a case for being the world's friendliest feline. And in a perfect "Beastmaster" moment, Donato's personal pet, a yellow ferret named—surprise!—Yellow runs all around the room. But the animals seem to calm down when Donato talks to them, like he's a pet whisperer.

Perhaps it could be argued that the art of healing was predestined for the 38-year-old Donato. His father, Nicholas, had been a general surgeon and his mother, Nora Luisa, a pharmacist. The sixth in a brood of eight, Donato clearly was good with animals even at a young age. When going to church, he would wander off to some sidestreet to buy the ducklings, chicks and fish that the vendors were offering. The boy would care for the small animals at his San Andres, Malate home and when they got sick, Donato would ask his father to treat them. "It's really my passion to be with animals," he explains.

Back then, it wasn't common practice to bring your ailing pets to the vet; it was more usual to provide medical care for livestock. "There were restrictions back then about taking care of pets in your house; I had to sneak in a puppy and hide it under my bed. Before my parents realized it, I had a one-year-old dog they didn't know about." He would throw a fit to rescue live chickens destined for dinner. He would continue to gather pets until he had his own "Old McDonald thing" (the farm, not the fastfood).

New direction

Donato graduated from Gregorio Araneta University Foundation (now known as De La Salle-Araneta) with a degree in Veterinary Medicine, pursuing his interest in small and exotic animals. He would go on to work at an animal clinic in Binondo, while taking care of their family's resort—the La Vista Pansol Resort—on the weekends. But after speaking with another vet who happened to be visiting the resort, Donato found a whole new direction in July 1994. "What are you doing here, you're a vet," the vet, Dr. Perry Peralta, asked him. "You studied for six years and you're manning this place?" Donato visited Peralta's office and heard the phone ring the moment he arrived. Peralta picked up the phone and, eyeing Donato, told the caller, "Yeah, I got your vet right here. He's here," before handing the phone to his shocked visitor.

Bizarrely enough, that wasn't the biggest shock of all. "When can you come to Singapore?" the voice on the other end asked. Singapore? "Can you come here next week?" the caller continued. "No, I'm gonna get married next week," Donato answered. "Can you give me a month?"

So after marrying wife Carol, he did make that move, which was how Donato wound up working for two years at the Mount Pleasant Animal Hospital, the biggest, most advanced animal hospital in Singapore. How, uh, pleasant was his tour there? He was so fond of Mount Pleasant that he continues to wear the personalized blue scrubs he wore there. "It's made of very good material."

Upon returning from Singapore, Donato began pinch-hitting for vets who were going on vacation and, more crucially, began doing house calls. The house calls, aided by Donato's amazing bedside manner with all sorts of pets, is what made him a staple among a widening circle of clients, including diplomats and celebrities. "I wasn't just doing vaccinations, I was looking at deeper problems," he recalls. Donato's pager (it was a different time) would be going off constantly as he worked seven days a week.

Exotic animal specialists

When good friend and fellow vet Dr. Michael Velhagen returned from Singapore, Donato began thinking of setting up a clinic. Their surgical clinic in Bangkal, Makati was just a converted, narrow apartment where they would go just to do operations. Donato acted as a consultant to private zoos, and soon invited a US-trained zoo vet, Dr. Marga de la Rosa, to join him. Soon on board was de la Rosa's friend, Dr. Nick Carpio, who had returned from the States. The four formed Vets in Practice two years ago in Mandaluyong City. "I finally got what I wanted, so I'm really happy," Donato says.

As Vets in Practice thrived, Donato was invited by Henry Babiera, the brains behind the Tiendesitas complex, to put up a clinic there, for the pet village. That's how Donato, De la Rosa-Carpio (she married Nick) and Dr. Raymond de Villa put together Animal Care Specialist, which is also doing well. Donato and De la Rosa-Carpio are both exotic animal specialists. With De Villa being an equine specialist, the group effectively treat "dogs, cats, birds, fish, reptiles, exotics and horses."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Rescuing and healing: Bringing a jaguar in for some dental work

As if two clinics aren't enough, Donato manages the Laguna Wildlife Park and Rescue Center in Los Baños. Traveling to Laguna every weekend, he oversees the rescued animals and cares for them. Often, the Center receives indigenous wild animals that had originally been pets, such as pythons, eagles, owls and cloud rats as well as animals from raids conducted on illegal animal traders. The Park features various species including ostriches, a gibbon, even a rare pair of endangered bearcats. Originally located on Corregidor Island, the Center also breeds exotic animals on site.

Donato also teaches vet students from different universities and feels excited about the Philippine Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, Inc., or PAWVI, of which he is a founding member. "It's a group of vets who are passionate about conservation and doing wildlife vet work." For example, PAWVI visits the Calauit preserve and provides medical care and supplies for the animals since the preserve doesn't have its own vets.

Save the elephant

As part of his job, Donato treats all animals, from tortoises to tigers, part of the ever-expanding menagerie of marsupials and mammals in his memory. He's performed a caesarian section on a lioness, surgery on guinea pigs, and made prosthetics for bird beaks. One thing he does regularly is transfer crocodiles at the Avilon Zoo in Montalban, Rizal, which involves binding and physically holding down the croc. He has moved as many as seven large reptiles in a single day. "I love doing that 'Croc Hunter' stuff," he says.

Perhaps the largest animal he's wrangled with, however, is an escaped elephant. Yes, Donato was one of the experts tasked to deal with Dumbo, the elephant who had escaped from his enclosure at Araneta Center and took a stroll down Edsa. Weirdly enough, Donato was already in the area and happened by the commotion right before he was called in.

Home life is as busy and full; he and Carol have two children, Cedric, 10, and Nina, 2. Donato stays in shape by swimming and playing badminton. As can be expected, he keeps lots of pets at home, among them an exotic shorthair cat named Tiger, a Burmese python named Giordano, an African gray parrot named Mandela and, his favorite, a Black Labrador named Veda. "She's the first dog I got when I got back from Singapore and she's the one special dog who's allowed to stay inside," he says, noting that he has simply never been able to live without pets.

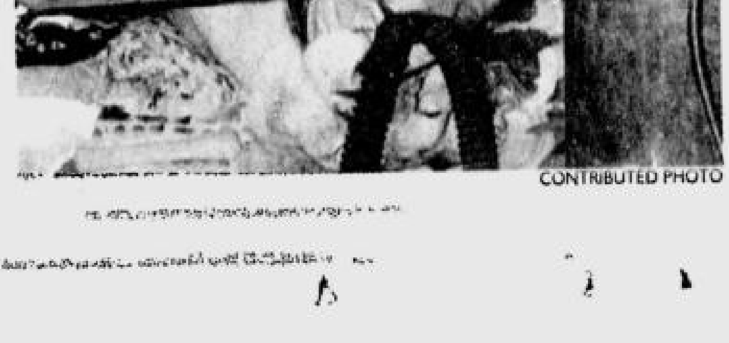
As if all that wasn't enough, Donato is president of the Rotary Club in the UN area in Manila, a group whose advocacies include outreach trips to the Mangyans. Donato treats the Mangyans' pets for free during these visits to Mindoro.

As more Filipinos take to caring for pets, especially now, when many of them live in flats by themselves, Donato says vets have to live up to certain qualities. "You have to be honest," he says. "You shouldn't sell them medicine and procedures they don't need." He talks to the owners like they're parents and the pets are children, calling the pets "your son" or "your child." He also understands the connection the people have with their pets and will do everything within his power to save or prolong these beloved animals' lives.

Led back to the path of caring for animals, he has embraced that path fully. "My goal is to put up a really complete hospital and to do more of my conservation projects," he explains. There are so many more animals in need of rescuing and healing out there, after all. The vet pauses as the clinic is suddenly filled with the lively sound of a bird chirping, Donato's ringtone. As always, Dr. Nielsen Donato answers the call. Q

For inquiries, call Dr. Nielsen Donato at 0919-2038094.

RAFFY LERMA



Pet whisperer: Donato with a patient, Francis, a Mini Schnauzer; performing a caesarean section on a lioness

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

All in the Game

by Jasmine W. Payo
photographs by August dela Cruz

Gold Medal Cyclist Pedals Back Into Shape After A Fall

PHILIPPINES

CYCLIST Alfie Catalan has become used to pain. Although doctors have yet to pronounce his left leg healthy, the 23rd Southeast Asian Games gold medalist is back on his bike three days after a motorcycle accident.

"I can't help it," says Catalan in Filipino. "The doctors put a cast on my leg, but I removed it the next day. I'm not used to just sitting around. I was walking without crutches, and the doctors got angry. They put a bandage, but after a few days, I took it off again and started biking. My doctors and coach got angry again because I was forcing it."

Luckily, the motorcycle accident that put his leg in a cast came after Alfie Catalan had already won the Philippines a SEA Games gold. Besides, this hardworking athlete is no stranger to obstacles

Thinking that his athletic career had come to an end, Catalan remembered clearly when a taxi rammed into his motorcycle on the night of Dec. 6, just two days after he captured a gold medal in the four-kilometer individual pursuit in cycling.

He kept on screaming, that he remembered exactly.

"I thought my career was over," Catalan recalls. "I couldn't move my leg. It was so swollen. And I was screaming at everyone, I kept asking them to bring me to the hospital. But at the same time I was praying that it wasn't the end of it. At the emergency room, I was still screaming because it even took a while before they attended to me. *Nagwawala na ako*" (I was freaking out).

It was his future that greatly concerned the promising 23-year-old cyclist. The physical pain was nothing, he said. That, he knew only too well.

Nothing less than the best

Catalan's childhood has a storyline seen in too many movies. Coming from a family of avid cyclists, Catalan had a strict father who pushed his son to the limit.

"*Pinapalo niya ko ng kahoy o sinturon pag bumabagal ako o nahuhuli ako sa mga karera o* practice. *Umiiyak talaga ako. Ayoko nang mag-*bike. Feeling *ko* torture," he says. (He would hit me with a wooden stick or a belt if I slowed down, or if I was late for a race or practice. I would really cry. I didn't want to bike.)

Showing early potential, Catalan competed in numerous hometown races in Pangasinan. And his father would not accept anything less than what he thought was the best.

"There were times I felt like giving up. I was only 12. *May mga* times *pa na gusto ko nang lumayas. Nagbabalot na ko ng damit.* (I wanted to run away from home. I was already packing my clothes.) He was very strict with my training. He said his point was he wanted me to be strong right away," he says.

But in retrospect, Catalan thinks he has always loved the sport. And now, he believes his father only had all the good intentions.

"I would always cry then, but the next day, I'd forget about it and I'd go biking again," he notes.

In fact, Catalan also has a lot of fond memories with his father. Besides, he rarely sees his mother, who still works as a housekeeper in Hong Kong.

"My mother comes home every two or three years and will stay here for just a few weeks. It has been that way for most of my life. So when I was young, I was always with my father. We'd just go biking anywhere, and it was fun. We get to go to many places. And that's why I learned to love cycling. You see all the scenery here in the Philippines. You can go anywhere, see places you never thought we had here in the country," he says.

The father and son, though, never lost sight of their real goal. Through their road adventures, they soon got hooked up with national cyclists.When he was 16, Catalan tried out for the junior RP team.

"I had the second best time in the try-outs," notes Catalan, who has been staying since then at the athletes' quarters in the Amoranto Stadium in Quezon City.

Perfectionist

And it seemed that Catalan also imbibed his father's perfectionist attitude.

"When I was younger, I used to cry when I lost. Especially if I knew that I could have won. It affects your morale. But now I try to learn from it. I just try to do better next time," he says.

After competing in numerous local races, Catalan headed to his first international stint in the 2000 Asian Cycling Championship in Taiwan.

"Our cycling officials listed me in the elite category instead of the juniors. And once you join the elite, you can't compete in the juniors anymor,e no matter what your age is. But I finished fourth."

Catalan continued to show promise, landing fourth in the 2001 SEA Games in Malaysia and finally securing a bronze medal in the 2003 SEA Games in Vietnam.

In 2004, he bagged a gold and a silver in the Queen's Cup in Thailand.

"I kept on training and training. You would never see me go out after practice. I'm just a full-time athlete," Catalan says.

And that unbelievable focus, he says, helped him capture his first SEA Games gold in record-breaking fashion.

Catalan clocked in at four minutes, 59.42 seconds in the four-kilometer individual pursuit, breaking the five-minute mark for the first time in his career. He also gave the Philippines a silver medal in the four-kilometer team pursuit and a bronze in the team sprint.

Next, the Olympics

"I really prepared for this SEA Games. It's one of my three targets. First is the SEA Games, next is the Asian Games, then the Olympics," he says.

Catalan confessed, though, that he still felt quite uncertain of his chances.

"I wasn't expecting it because our opponents were very strong. I knew we had the home court advantage, we're used to the Velodrome. But the cyclists from Malaysia and Indonesia trained in Europe for six months, so I was also worried."

The euphoria of winning, however, faded two days later when a speeding taxi rammed into his motorcycle at around 8 p.m. along Roces Avenue in Quezon City.

"I was going to buy laundry detergent and some groceries nearby. I was running only 20-30 km per hour, when I saw a taxi running fast as it rounded a corner. I tried to jump off my motorcycle but it was too late."

Catalan sustained eight stitches on the chin and bruises all over his body. Now, though, he can only laughingly recall how he was initially ignored at the emergency room.

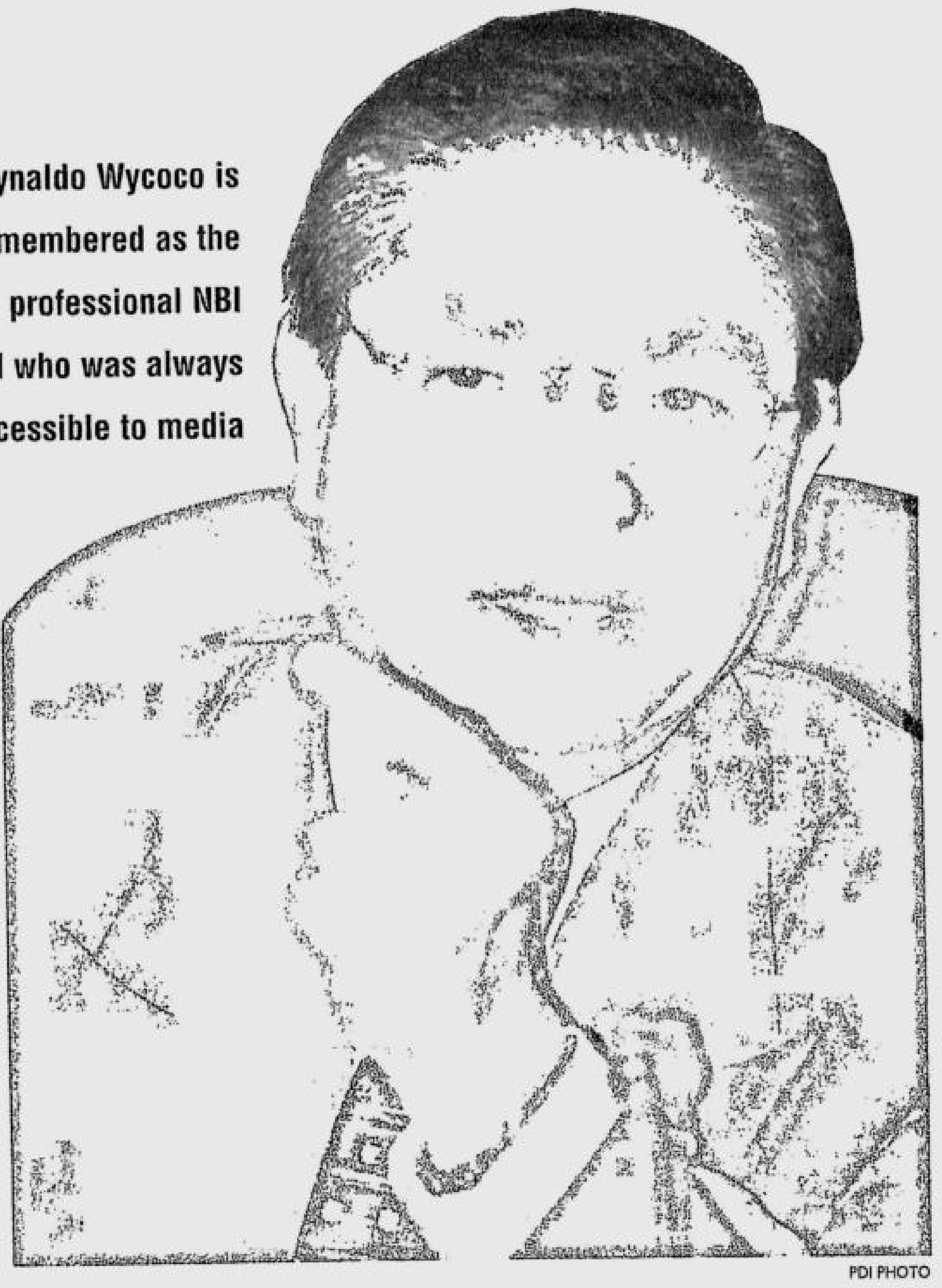
"I was already screaming because there was no doctor attending to me. But when the investigator noticed how tanned my legs were, that was the only time I said that I won the gold in the SEA Games. Then all the doctors suddenly attended to me," he laughs.

But the accident is all behind him now as he sprints back on the road.

"I will continue to push myself. This is what I want," Catalan says. "My life revolves around cycling." Q by Fe B. Zamora

The Chief With An Open Door

Reynaldo Wycoco is remembered as the dapper, professional NBI head who was always accessible to media



PDI PHOTO

OME TIME in October, the INQUIRER forwarded a text joke about the supposedly unquenchable thirst for money of the First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo to National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) director Reynaldo Wycoco. In a matter of seconds, Wycoco texted back. "I thought that title was held by Atong Ang," apparently amused and wanting to swap more jokes. In turned out he was in the US on official business, and was entertaining himself by answering all jokes with text jokes.

But that was also typical "Wykes," as we, members of the defense press corps, knew him from our coverage of the Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police (PC-INP) in the '80s, and even until the PC-INP was renamed Philippine National Police in January, 1991. Wykes served as PNP public information officer from July 1991 to August 1992. Unlike other officials whom we could only see on official working days, Wykes was always accessible to media, whether on official or not-so-official matters.

PDI PHOTO

As PNP's public information officer

"Everybody loved him for that," Rodney Jaleco, former Philippine Star defense reporter and now desk editor at the ABS-CBN, said.

Unruffled

Of course, it helped a lot that Wykes, a 1968 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), was one who could not be ruffled by tough-talking newsmen. (And sometimes, women, too.) At that time, reporters like Bobby Burgos, Joe Capadocia, Nonie Pelayo, Alden Alag, Frankie Tuyay, and Ben Cal walked the corridors of Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo.

Tempo justice reporter Amor Lopez, who covered the defense beat then, remembered Wykes as someone who "always looked and smelled good, always a gentleman, never hot under the collar and who always requested the song 'Interlude' during the Friday sing-along night outs."

During one chit-chat with reporters, Wykes casually blurted out that NPA commander *Ka* Hector was already in Manila. Lopez and Capadocia broke the story the next day. Days later, Wykes would tell the two reporters how he was balled out by higher officials for leaking that *Ka* Hector was in Ma nila. "But he was not angry with us. He took it as part of his job," Lopez recalled.

Wykes' closeness with media suffered a strain when now Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who was his junior at the PMA, took over as PNP chief during the Estrada administration. As PNP deputy chief of staff for administration, Wykes was in a discomfiting position as number two in the hierarchy. The power struggle also caused a split in the press corps, with some members openly siding with Wykes, whose relations with media started much, much earlier than that of Lacson's.

Serious conversations

Thus, when the anti-Erap forces were enjoining the PNP officials to withdraw support from the President, it seemed natural that a media man would be tapped as intermediary to Wykes.

The task fell on the shoulders of Manila Bulletin's Aris Ilagan.

According to Aris, he simply passed a note to Wykes, asking him to go to Rustan's Makati where he was invited for a "very serious conversation."

But Ilagan said there was a problem. "We knew Wykes was under surveillance. We were being watched," he said. From Rustan's, Wykes boarded a car with Ilagan at the wheel. As the car moved around a car park, Wykes and the group's representative planned the withdrawal of support from Estrada, which actually took place a few days later.

"When Wykes was asked, 'Are you with us?" He replied, *'Ang tagal n'yo namang magtanong'* (It took you a while to ask)," Ilagan recalled.

On January 23, 2001, Wycoco was named NBI chief, where he continued with his endearing trademark of giving access to media anytime, anywhere. He passed away on December 19, at age 59.

For This

...from page 3

Amoy, the company passed on to two of his nephews, one of them Lim Chay Seng, and later to James Limpe, Lim Chay Seng's son. Limpe took over in 1937 and introduced modern management into the business. His son, Julius Limpe, became the company CEO in 1958. Olivia, Julius' fifth-born, became EVP in the early '90s.

She couldn't have chosen a worse time.

"It was 1989 and we were in the middle of a bad strike. The plants had been closed for more than six months and when we reopened them, we found that we'd lost our market share for White Castle whisky. It was then I realized that no matter how big your company is, it can be gone in a flash. So I became determined to continue the business no matter what," recounts this Business Economics graduate of UP.

When she took over the reins, Limpe-Aw confessed to facing doubts and resistance from several shareholders, customers, suppliers and employees. What could a young woman in her late twenties know about running a male-dominated company that targets liquor-drinking men? And did she know how to deal with labor unions? A liquor company on strike was certainly not a place for a young mother of two, others pointed out.

Those were certainly very difficult years, Limpe-Aw acknowledges, and it took her six to seven years to overcome her two main handicaps: her youth and her gender. "I had to put in more hours and work harder to prove my worth and earn the respect of clients and colleagues," she recounts. Fortunately, she adds, she had good help and supportive sisters who took care of her young children. Husband Benny Aw also proved to be a wonderful backstop.

She met Benny through a family friend who had initially matched him with one of Olivia's older sisters. "But my sister already had a boyfriend at that time and decided not to appear at all during the official introduction," recalls Limpe-Aw. "*Para di mapahiya* (so he won't lose face), I had to go down and see him. Then we started dating. I was only 19 at that time." Three years later, the couple got married. They have three sons aged 19, 17 and 13.

Benny the buffer

Her husband, reveals Limpe-Aw, willingly became her buffer when she talked with more traditional clients from Asia. "We were exporting to several Asian countries, and most Asians still prefer to negotiate with men. When we go abroad, they would talk with Benny directly even when I was there. It was a good thing he handled domestic distribution so he knew the business inside out. And of course, he came in handy after the deals had been signed. Otherwise, how could I have entertained our clients and suppliers in karaoke bars?"

In business, she adds, it is important to know where you stand. "You have to accept the reality," she says. "Instead of forcing the issue, you must find ways to do things and not take problems personally." She shrugs. "Life's not fair, especially in business. It's basically a man's world, and you have to adjust. You must learn to go with the flow."

But women definitely have a place in business, she notes. "They have their particular strengths. They give more attention to details and are better at improving systems." Female managers, she adds, are really good at planning and organizing. They're also more sensitive to the feelings of those around them. Male managers are better as implementors and excel at technical stuff and sales. "*Ay, talagang* men are from Mars and women are from Venus. We're totally different!" she adds with a laugh.

Overhauled portfolio

Good sales knows no gender, however, and Limpe-Aw cites several changes she had introduced to Destileria Limtuaco that firmed up her leadership in the company. "Though our products are geared for a mass market, I overhauled our portfolio and introduced premium local brands like VSOP. We became more flexible, with custom-made products and private labels. We also improved the packaging and the quality of our liquor to become ISO 9000 certified. Then we went into export to generate more sales. Customer satisfaction became our main concern because we thrive on repeat business."

Hands-on: Limpe-Aw at the Destileria Limtuaco bottling plant

Her best contributions, she adds, remain Paradise Mango Rum Liqueur, which won first place in the CITEM ethnic food fest in 2002, and the Vodka Knockers in 2005. Limtuaco's other products include Napoleon Brandy, London Dry Gin, Maria Clara Sangria and Rainforest Mineral Water.

Limpe-Aw is also known as the publisher of "The 9 Lives of Luis 'Chavit' Singson," a biography co-written with Singson by her sister Linda Limpe. But there's nothing political about the venture, Limpe-Aw explains. The publishing business was something she got by default, she adds. "My number 6 sister, Isabel Limpe Chungunco, is an artist but couldn't get any publisher for her picture book, 'Alphabeto.' So I put up a publishing company and sold the book to the Education department. But when I tried to pass on the company to Isabel, she started weeping. She wanted to remain an artist, she said; she never wanted to become a publisher. So by default, the company landed on my lap and I had to look for materials to publish. The Chavit project just happened to be around."

Her latest project, says this natural-born business woman, is closer to home. "I'm training my children to take over the company someday. I tell them, 'If you find the old ways corny, make a difference in your own time and on your own terms, but continue the family business. Keep it alive. Entrepreneurship creates wealth, and that improves the country.'"

This Week

Art

Enduring summer beauties grace the one-woman exhibit, **Flores et Femina (Flowers and Women)** by Lily Avila-Wuzela until Dec. 26 at the Rockwell Club Lobby, Makati City.

Fifteen beautifully crafted lanterns from Bauan, Batangas will be on exhibit until Jan.7 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. The works of art won top prizes in a lantern contest held recently at the Bauan High School. The ***Pistang Parulan* 2005**'s prize-winning lanterns are made of garlic cloves, rice stalks, fish scales, monggo, leaves, glass and mirrors.

Junk Art Carnival at the Museo Pambata with exhibition of works by Romy Gabriel

Under One Roof, a solo exhibit by Anton Del Castillo consisting of seven artworks painted in oil on gold leaf panels revealing the artist's commentary about war, until Dec. 31 at the Bulwagang Fernando Amorsolo of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Re:Make, an exhibit of mixed media pieces and canvas works in black and white by Alfredo Juan Aquilizan at the Drawing Room, G/F, Metrostar Building, 1007 Metropolitan Avenue, Makati City until Jan. 11. For details, call 897-6990 or 897-7877.

Papel ng Papel features the paper art by renowned artists and designers Impy Pilapil, Tes Pasola and Tony Gonzales, until January 2006 at the Metropolitan Museum, Bangko Sentral Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Manila. For details, call 521-1517.

The works of four Visayas-based artists will be featured in ***Dula sa Lapuk* (Claystuff) Traveling Art Exhibition** at the CCP's Pasilyo Victorio Edades until Jan. 16. Kitty Taniguchi, Danilo Sollesta, Mark Valenzuela and Nelia Lungay put together a collection of small and large sculptural pieces and installations tackling diverse subjects-some with social realist flavors, individual statements and metaphysical musings. For details, call 832-3702.

Juan Arellano: Drawing Space is currently on exhibit at the Lopez Memorial Museum exploring the dynamics of space in relation to memory-making and acts of self-imaging. Exhibit runs until April 8.

Museo Pambata ng Maynila presents **Junk Art Carnival**, an exhibition of works by Romy Gabriel, featuring carnival miniature rides out of recyclable materials such as plastics, glass, and metals. Exhibit runs until Jan. 15. The Museo Pambata is located at Roxas Boulevard corner South Drive in Manila. For details, call 523-1797 or 523-1798.

Poder: The Cult of President, an exhibit of the portraits of Philippine presidents ongoing until March 1, 2006 at the Museum of the Filipino People, along Finance Road and Teodoro Valencia Circle (formerly Agrifina), Manila. Works of portraitists Fernando Amorsolo, Guillermo Tolentino and Martino Abellana mingle with the caricatures of Liborio Gatbonton, the editorial cartoons of Jose Pereira, inaugural speeches of presidents, and fragments of the 13th century Butuan Boat. For details, call 527-1215 and 524-3005.

Ayala Museum presents anew the dioramas of Philippine History through **The Diorama Experience**—a permanent exhibition that depicts 60 dioramas of major historical events from prehistoric Philippines to the recognition of Philippine independence by the United States in 1946. Ayala Museum is located at the corner of Makati Avenue and Dela Rosa Street, Makati City. For details, call 757-7117 to 21.

Onstage

Koiné One Acts will have an extended run of Niel de Mesa's best-selling comedy, ***Sampung Minuto Bago Makaraos***, on Jan. 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m. The play revolves on a chance encounter of two strangers in a public comfort room who goes through a cathartic experience while taking a dump. Running in tandem with "*Sampung Minuto Bago Makaraos*" is De Mesa's award-winning play, **I Laugh With You**, about courtship. Call 410-4485 to reserve seats. Koiné One Acts is located at 2/F Forab Building, 121 Kamuning Road, QC.

The UP Playwrights' Theatre showcases three masterpieces of the late Severino Montano—**Sabina, The Ladies and the Senator** and ***Paalaman sa* Calamba (Parting at Calamba)**. "Sabina" is about a young farm girl whose family reproaches her for having a relationship with an American businessman. "Parting at Calamba" is an episode in Jose Rizal's life. "The Ladies and the Senator" is a comedy about a Filipino senator visiting the US through an invitation of the Filipino Women's Club of Washington, DC. The plays will run from Jan. 18-29 at the Teatro Hermogenes Ylagan, UP Diliman, Quezon City. For inquiries, call Dulaang UP at 926-1349 and 920-5302 loc. 6441.

Cinema

The **UP Film Institute** presents its lineup of specials set for January for its annual **Asian showcase**. East of Eros features "Kamasutra 1 & 2" (Jan. 11, 5 and 7 p.m.); "The Pillow Book" (Jan. 12, 5 p.m.) and "Sex and Zen 1 & 2" (Jan. 26, 5 p.m. and Jan. 30, 5 p.m. respectively). Gateway to Great Asia, which offers glimpses of the vibrant continent in its entirety as a study in contrast in terms of way of life, system of thought, arcane crannies and urban jungles, hallmark "Arahan" (Jan. 10, 5 p.m.); "The New Police Story" (Jan. 18, 5 p.m.); "The Myth" (Jan. 18, 7 p.m.); "The Year of the Yao" (Jan. 24, 5 p.m.); "Shanghai Lily" (Jan. 25, 5 p.m.): "The Bride with White Hair" (Jan. 30, 7 p.m.) and "Harold and Kumar" (Jan. 27, 5 p.m.). Finally, Horror in the Orient Express highlights a spectacular sampling of the very genre Asian filmmakers have managed to reinvent with "Ghost" (Jan. 19, 5 p.m.), "Six" (Jan. 19, 7 p.m.), "Death Curse" (Jan. 31, 5 p.m.) and "Gawi" (Jan. 31, 7 p.m.). Other screenings include Craze for Remakes offerings with "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" presented by UP Organization of Business Economics Majors (Jan. 13, 5 p.m.) and "The Longest Yard" presented by UP Silak Silab (Jan. 20, 5 p.m.). For details, call 981-8500 local 2669/2670.

Atbp

In the **art lecture** "There Where Nothing Happens: The Poetry of Space in Juan Arellano" on Jan. 21, 2 to 4 p.m., Dr Remmon E. Barbaza uses the philosophy of Heidegger to show how Arellano's works - buildings, landscapes, portraits, etc. - create a space where everything that matters happens, and in which everything that happens is that which matter. The lecture complements the exhibition Juan Arellano: Drawing Space which features works of architect-painter Juan Arellano and is ongoing until April 2006. The Lopez Memorial Museum is at the ground floor, Benpres Building, Exchange Road corner Meralco Avenue, Pasig. For inquiries, call 631-2417 or email pezseum@skyinet.net.

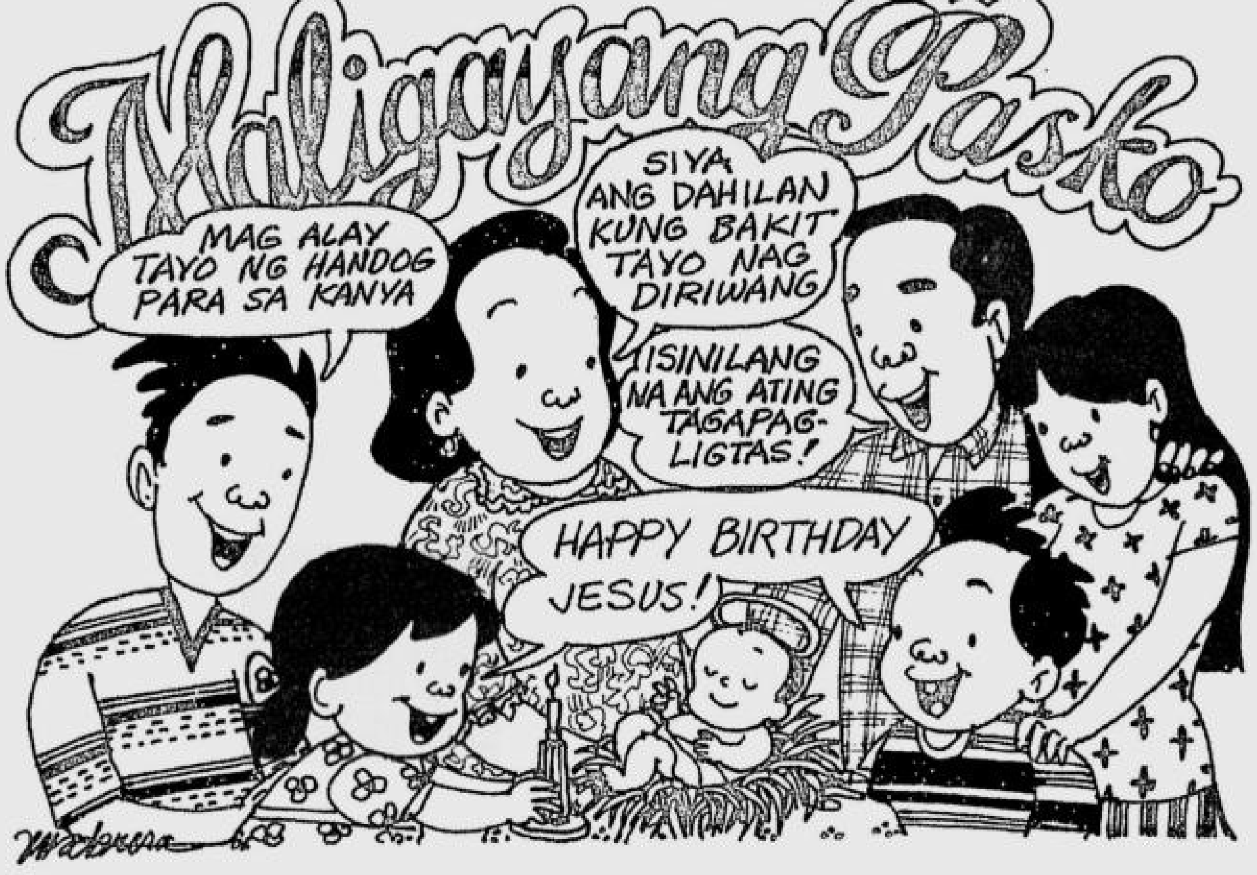
Photoworld Manila 2006 accepts online registration for the biggest photography trade fair from Feb. 9-14, 2006 at the Glorietta, Ayala Center, Makati City. Photography tools and equipment of different models will be on display at the activity center of Glorietta where shoppers can choose from an array of camera models, film or digital. Participants can attend all seminars for four days. Vicky Tauter and Michael Tailor lead top local and foreign photographers as lecturers in the event to be held at the Asian Institute of Management. For details, call 813-7420 and 843-5341 or log on to www.photoworldmanila.com.

X-manila

Pinto Art Gallery located at 1 Sierra Madre Grand Heights, Antipolo City, Rizal features simultaneous solo exhibits by three noted artists—minimalist abstractionist **Gus Albor** at The House Gallery, painter-printmaker **Ofelia Gelvezon-Tequi** at the Gallery 2 and Gallery Shop, and noted photographer **Wig Tysmans** at Gallery 1. Exhibits run until January. For details, call 697-1015.

Pinoy Nga!

Maligayang Pasko


Maligayang Pasko
MAG ALAY TAYO NG HANDOG PARA SA KANYA
SIYA ANG DAHILAN KUNG BAKIT TAYO NAG DIRIWANG
ISINILANG NA ANG ATING TAGAPAG-LIGTAS!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY JESUS!
Abrera

The Sunday Inquirer Magazine welcomes listings of events in and outside Metro Manila. Please send announcements at least two weeks in advance, and include contact numbers for inquiries on schedules

INQUIRER

TV GUIDE

Sunday, December 25, 2005

Sayaw Drama Iba
Shall We Dance?
The Celebrity Dance Challenge
Sunday 9 PM
ABC
Iba Tayo!
hosted by Lucy Torres Gomez

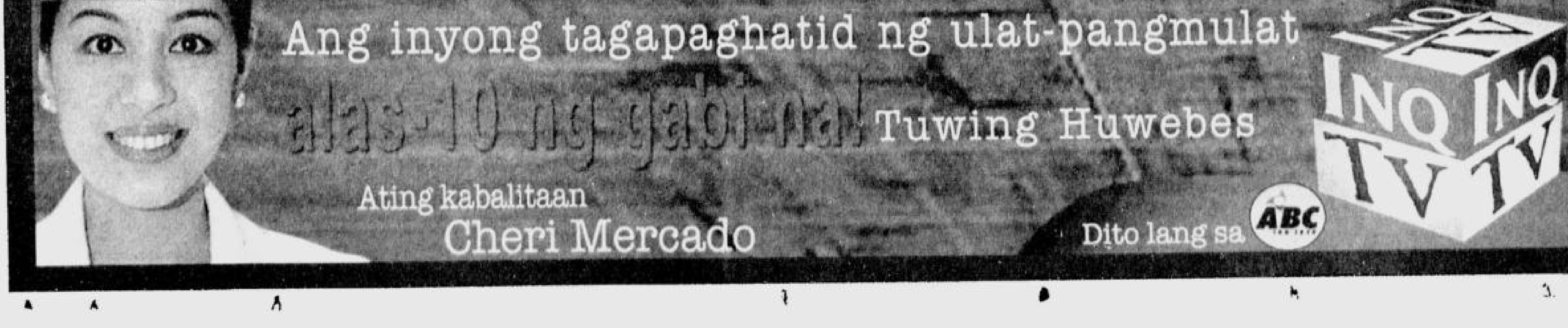
Provided by ClickTheCity.com

For more TV schedules:

1. Visit www.ClickTheCity.com or wap.clickthecity.com.
2. Key in CTC TV and send to 2333 for Globe and to 225 for Smart. PhP2.50 per SMS sent.

							5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM			
ABC 5		Ringside TV		PBA										Shall We Dance?		Christmas Message By Pope Benedict XVI			
ABS-CBN 2	A.S.A.P Fanatics		Pinoy Big Brother Buzz		The Buzz				Goin' Bulilit		Search For A Star In A Million	Rated K		TV Patrol World	Pinoy Big Brother	Sunday Family Cinema			
AXN		Last Action Hero					Samsung Sports World	AXN Shakedown		Ultimate Guinness World Records	Ultimate Guinness World Records	Numb3rs (Season 1)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 4)		CSI: NY (Season 1)		CSI: Miami (Season 3)	
Cartoon Network	X-Men Evolution	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Xiaolin Showdown	Tom & Jerry Show		Atomic Betty	What's New Scooby Doo?	The Little Troll Prince		Postman Pat	The Little Polar Bear	Powerpuff Girls	Courage The Cowardly Dog	Dexter's Laboratory	Crush Gear Nitro	Power Rangers Ninja Storm	Superman The Animated Series	Harvey Birdman (11:15PM)	Mission Hill
Cinema One				The Prince And The Pauper				Dreamboy				A Christmas Carol				9 Mornings			
Cinemax		Little Women (3:15 PM)					First Target			The Assassin (7:15 PM)				Gargoyle's Revenge			Sleepless In Seattle		
CNN	International Correspondents	World News	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	World News	Design 360	World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		World News	Talk Asia	World News	MainSail	World News	World Sport	Global Challenges	Business Traveller	Talk Asia	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart
Discovery Channel		Mostly True Stories		American Chopper		Ultimates		Mythbusters		Hour Asia		Cathay Pacific Signature Series		Stealth Secrets		FBI Files		Power Zone	
Disney Channel	Recess	Totally Spies	Lizzie McGuire	Brandy & Mr Whiskers	Lilo & Stitch	Totally Spies	Mr Bean	Phil Of The Future	Suite Life Of Zack And Cody	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Mr. Bean	America's Funniest Home Video	Phil Of The Future	Even Stevens	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Pool Snooker Premier Snooker League '05				Boxing Series Friday Night Fights				Atlantic Coast Conf. Basketball St John's Vs Duke		Sportscenter Asia Rewind 05 NBA All Star Game Int. USA							
ETC	Will & Grace	Saturday Night Live		Veronica Mars		American Dreams		One Tree Hill		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		Average Joe		Rated Oh!	The Insider Weekend	Meet My Folks		ET Weekend	
EWTN	Pilgrimages To The Shrines Of Eastern Europe	Angelus (3:15 PM)	The Donut Man	Adventures In Odyssey	Deep Contemplation Deep Prayer	Rosary With Mother Angelica	Octava Dies	Rome Reports	EWTN Bookmark	EWTN Global Showcase		Onward Pilgrims	Mirror Of The Soul	Sunday Mass (SAP) Live			Life Is Worth Living	The Abundant Life	
Fox News		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Fox Report Saturday		Heartland With John Kasich		Big Story Weekend Edition		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Fox & Friends Sunday						Fox News Live	
GMA 7	Gigsters	Love To Love		S-Files				Mahiwagang Baul		Starstruck 3		Mel & Joey		All Star K		Daddy Di Do Du		Sunday Night Box Office	
Hallmark Channel	The Nanny III	Annie's Point				Single Santa Seeks Mrs. Claus				Naughty Or Nice		Christmas Carol: The Musical			Dog Gone Love (10:35PM)				
HBO					Patch Adams				Joe's Apartment			HBO Coming Attractions 2006				Dreamcatcher (9:50 PM)			
IBC 13		EZ Shop		EZ Shop	Mr. Taxman	Home Shopping Network		Home Shopping Network		Legacy Of Hero						Ito Ang Katarungan	EL SHADDAI		
JackTV		Reno 911	Blue Collar TV	X-Play	Sweet	Street Smart	The Sib Show	Hip Hop Nation	Ride With Funk Master Flex	WWE Afterburn		WWE Smackdown				South Park	The Man Show	Insomniac W/ Dave Attell	Beat The Geeks
Lifestyle Network	Date With Design	Ground Rules	Outer Spaces	Your Private Island	Breathing Room	Back To Basics	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Ciao America With Mario	Nigella Christmas Bites		Will Work For Stars		5 Children & It				Open House	
MTV Philippines	Mosh		Laguna Beach	MTV Cribs	Wade Robson Project	Viva La Bam	Pimp My Ride	Get Hitched	MTV Screen	MTV Cool Xmas 2005	Spring Break	MTV Presents				Whatever Things	MTV Hits	Essential VH1	
MYX		Pinoy MYX Countdown				Take 5	MYX Bandarito	MYX News	Star MYX	MYXLOG	Pop MYX	MYX Presents		MYX Hit Chart				MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX
National Geographic		Amazing Moments		The Other Final		Science Of Football		Top 5		Wow!		About Asia! No Roads: Longest River		Nat'l Geographic Specials: Best Of The Week: Earth In Review		Treasure Fleet: The Adventures Of Zheng He			
NBN				3rd ASEAN Para-Olympic Games		Kamao Sa Kamao		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)			Inter-Aksyon Sa Bayan	Battle Royale		The Sports List	Go For Gold		Business & Leisure		Unlimited Diving
Nickelodeon	Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide	Unfabulous	Naturally Sadie	HaHa Holidays	Drake & Josh	Zoey 101	Avatar: The Last Airbender	Danny Phantom	My Life As A Teenage Robot	1, 2, 3	Wayside School	Four Eyes	Zoey 101	Unfabulous	Girls In Love	Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide	Four Eyes	The Wild Thornberrys	The Brothers Garcia
PBO			Mumbaki				PBO Fight Night				Ang Kuya Kong Siga				The Songbird And The Songwriter				Ang Pagbabalik Ni Pedro Penduko
QTV		Baywalk		Joan Of Arcadia		[illegible] Fashionista		Ang Pinaka...		Pop Star Kids		May Trabaho Ka		Sunday Super Sine				MINT (Music Interactive)	
RPN 9		Golf Power	Auto Extreme	Pistorama		JAG		JAG		Navy NCIS		Without A Trace		NBA On RPN				Sure Hits	The Working President
SBN 21				Buhay Pinoy		Shepherd's Voice		Sony Bmg Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras Ng Katotohanan		Gabay At Aksyon			
Solar Sports		ATP Stockholm Open Sweden						Super X Series Final	NBA Jam	NBA Game Rockets @ Nuggets					Arthur Gander Memorial Gymnastics				
Sports Plus				Golf Hawaii 2004	Get A Grip On Golf	World Poker Tour Primer		World Poker Tour ep 8 Paris				Ringworld		BD Cond	BD Maul	ADT Golf Skills Chall. Day 1			
Star Movies		Edward Scissorhands			Cheaper By The Dozen (4:40 PM)				The Terminal (6:20 PM)	[illegible] (6:50 PM)				Garfield The Movie			[illegible] (10:25PM)		
Star World		The Apprentice/ John Lennon Working Class Hero		Tru Calling		Business Week Asia	Travel Asia	Smallville		The Simpsons	Kumars At 42	Oprah Prime Time		Koffee With Karan		The Robinsons/ The Knightly Night	Human Remains	The Simpsons	Oprah Prime Time
Studio 23								[illegible]		Y Speak		Joey	Living With Fran	Will & Grace	F	Digital Tour	Chefs On The		Buffy The

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.


Ang inyong tagapaghatid ng ulat-pangmulat
alas-10 ng gabi na! Tuwing Huwebes
Ating kabalitaan
Cheri Mercado
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Young Achievers

by Eric S. Caruncho

A CHRISTMAS Story and A Dream Album from A Multitalented Girl Named Girl

She models, sings, and writes songs, poetry, and award-winning stories. Indeed, with her talent and generosity, Girl Valencia is doing her bit to change the world

RODEL ROTONI

NICK Joaquin was a fan. So are writer Pete Lacaba and INQUIRER founding chair Eugenia Apostol. Not many lounge singers can claim such a literate following. But then, not many lounge singers have won a National Book Award, either.

Meet Maria Theresa "Girl" Valencia: lounge singer, songwriter, model, author and, most recently, recording artist.

Two or three nights a week finds Valencia at one of several hotel lounges in the city, where she has landed a steady gig as a singer, performing standards and pop songs with an accompanist on piano or guitar.

Contrary to the popular notion of the lounge being a sort of limbo for performers not talented enough for "the big room," Valencia has managed to build up a small but devoted following, mainly through word of mouth.

Most singers try to please the crowd by trying to sing as close to the original as possible. Valencia counter-intuitively chooses to interpret the songs in her own style, which rejects flashy vocal mannerisms in favor of a more subtle, nuanced approach. It's an approach that usually goes unnoticed by casual listeners but catches the ears of those more perceptive.

The late National Artist Nick Joaquin became one such aficionado.

Correct lyrics

"He was very demanding," recalls Valencia. "He insisted on the correct lyrics. He would request one of his favorite songs, 'Someone To Watch Over Me,' and there would be a little note on the request which said 'with the intro, please'." According to her, Joaquin was also partial to such sentimental favorites as "The Shadow of Your Smile," "The Girl From Ipanema" and "*Bato Sa Buhangin.*" One time, he even asked her to learn a relatively obscure standard, "You're The Top."

Oddly, Valencia never told the celebrated author about her own writing.

"I didn't tell people I wrote, because I was just writing for myself," she says.

Many who knew her were taken by surprise when she won the aforementioned National Book Award this year in the Children's Book category for "The Christmas Fireflies," a Christmas fable about a little girl who rescues the titular fireflies that turn out to be Santa's little helpers.

Even more surprising is the fact that the book, her first published work, came to her in a dream.

"It was weird," she recalls. "I learned dream analysis at the Ateneo with Tony Perez. In order to analyze your dreams, you have to write them down as soon as you wake up, before you forget the details."

Having kept a dream journal for some time, Valencia was amazed when she transcribed what turned out to be the entire story for "The Christmas Fireflies."

"I just edited it and developed it, but what you read in the book is what I dreamed," she says.

So compelling was the dream that she decided to publish it as a book, complete with illustrations by Beaulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo. Valencia was just as surprised as anyone when it won the National Book Award.

Not content to rest on her laurels, Valencia followed this up with the launch last December 5 of "Driftwood Traveling," an independently released album of original songs inspired by her travels throughout the Philippines. It was the fulfillment of a dream 10 years in the making.

"I've been writing poems since I was five, and songs since I was 12," says Valencia. "I don't know, it just came naturally to me."

Valencia has vivid childhood memories of sitting with her crayons and doodling while listening to the "oldies" AM station. Over the years the doodles evolved into words, then into poems, and finally—fusing with the music she heard in her head—into songs.

Reflection and meditation

Her early inclination toward introspection and self-expression was reinforced by her education, first at the College of the Holy Spirit where she picked up the habit of reflection and meditation, and later at the Ateneo de Manila University where she studied Communication Arts.

Throughout her college years, she continued to focus on songwriting.

"I entered every songwriting contest there was, and I always won," she recalls. In 1991, she won third place in the Likhawit Songfest and first place in the Himagsikan Songfest. She won the Himagsikan Songfest again in 1993 with *"Tanging Mahal,"* which was eventually recorded by Regine Velasquez and was featured in her album *"Pangako Sa Iyo."* Two years later, she won the UNESCO Peace Song contest with "Breaking Barriers," which was also recorded by the Ateneo Boys Choir. Another original composition, "Happy World," made it to the finals of the 2001 MTV Song Competition in Singapore.

"I promised my parents that I would graduate first, but what I really wanted to do was to record my own songs," Valencia says. "By that time, in 1993, I already had maybe 400 songs. I thought the way to go was to go to a recording company, so I did demos of my own songs. I almost signed a contract, but they told me that I would have to record songs written by their producers. I felt so insulted because I knew my songs had potential."

Valencia's heroes then were the likes of Jose Mari Chan and Odette Quesada, singers who sang and recorded their own material.

"I respected them so much because they had the courage to write and sing their own songs," she says. "I promised myself that I would make this dream happen."

In the meantime, she decided to start singing in lounges to hone her skills.

"I was biding my time," she says. "I knew I had to have exposure even if I wasn't a recording artist. I started studying standards and pop songs. I had no formal voice lessons, although I learned how to project my voice in theater. I don't really believe in voice lessons because for me, singing comes from the heart. What's in your heart when you sing, *'yun na*. You can't teach it."

In the beginning, Valencia looked at her lounge gig as practice for the "real thing." But eventually, she began to enjoy performing for its own sake, and over the past 10 years, she has developed a special rapport with her listeners that only comes with experience.

Dream project

She never lost sight of her dream, however. She came close twice, recording enough material for two entire albums. But each time, circumstances forced her to scrap the projects.

Last October, while looking over her old songs, she found a 10-year-old song titled "Driftwood." She realized that she had written a lot of songs inspired by her travels, enough for an album.

"I like to travel," she explains. "I've been to the US, Europe and Asia, but I really love the Philippine islands, the beaches, the water, nature, and it made sense to write about what I learned during my travels. I keep a travel journal, and it's my source of inspiration."

With help from pianist and arranger Eric Obach, Valencia eventually produced her current album "Driftwood Traveling," a suite of travel-inspired songs that is the culmination of a dream 10 years in the making.

All in all, it's been a good year for Girl Valencia. Her wholesome, fresh-faced good looks also landed her two modeling assignments earlier this year, both for milk products. Releasing her dream album is a satisfying year-ender.

The singer hopes to share some of her blessings with the less fortunate through her chosen advocacy.

"World Vision is an international organization that helps underprivileged public school children, so they receive a monthly allowance," she says. "They've recently opened it to local sponsors, so I'm sponsoring a 14-year-old kid in Pangasinan. It's a small amount, P450 a month, but it really goes a long way, so I try to promote World Vision in all my activities."

Atta Girl.